

BEAUTY IN ISLAM

POEMS OF WHOLENESS, LIGHT AND CONCORD
RESPONDING TO THE QUR'AN, TO SCHOLARS,
TO LEGACIES OF TRADITION

السميع البصير الحكيم العدل اللطيف

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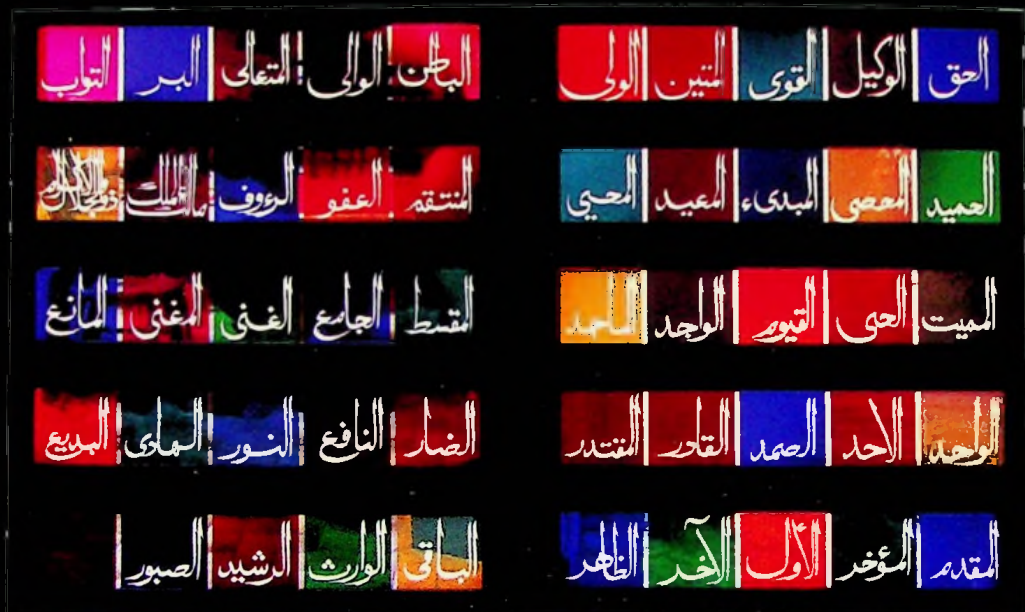
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MARTIN BIDNEY

The Arabic word "Islam" is related to the words "Peace," "Wholeness," and "Surrender." Two sayings relate to this. Qur'an 20:3 "Allah! There is no God save Him. His are the most beautiful names." A hadith adds that "God is beautiful and His are the most beautiful names." What is beautiful will have the qualities of Completeness, Brightness, and Harmony; that is, of Wholeness, Light, and Concord. . . . The Ninety-nine names of God are imaginative metaphors for what we cannot know with the mind but can love intensely with the heart.



ARTWORK: "99 Names of God in Arabic," stained glass © 2024 and courtesy of **Shahid Alam**. Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Binghamton University, **Martin Bidney** has published 52 books of poetry and 2 of literary criticism. Visit martinbidney.org and youtube for podcasts.

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BEAUTY IN ISLAM

POEMS OF WHOLENESS,
LIGHT, AND CONCORD



Ar-Rahim
The Merciful

BEAUTY IN ISLAM

POEMS OF WHOLENESS,
LIGHT, AND CONCORD

(Responding to the Qur'an, to Scholars,
to Legacies of Tradition)

by
Martin Bidney



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Foreword

The Arabic word "Islam" is related to the words "Peace," "Wholeness," and "Surrender." Two sayings relate to this. Qur'an 20:3 "Allah! There is no God save Him. His are the most beautiful names." A hadith adds that "God is beautiful and His are the most beautiful names."

What is beautiful will have the qualities of Completeness, Brightness, and Harmony; that is, of Wholeness, Light, and Concord. Ultimate Being cannot be intellectually known by a finite creature, but the "names" or metaphoric words we're inspired to say by the Created Worlds point to the unwordable nature of the Ultimate. The Ninety-nine names of God are imaginative metaphors for what we cannot know with the mind but can love intensely with the heart.

Each name of God is an approximator, imagination-expander, view-extender, capacity-stretcher. They are *metaphor*, a Greek word for *bearing beyond*. And as the ultimate metaphor-crafting world imager, the Unnamable is *ultimate poet*.

Ultimate Being's works of creative imagining each feel like an act of Mercy. The calligraphic work, reproduced here, by my friend Shahid Alam, says "Ar-Rahim, The Merciful." Anything beautiful and beloved is a gift of God's Mercy. I think of Mercy as Beauty manifest in Goodness.

THE
LIFE
OF
JAMES
MILN
ESQ.
OF
THE
CITY OF
GLASGOW
BY
JAMES
MILN
ESQ.
OF
THE
CITY OF
GLASGOW
IN TWO VOLUMES
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Introduction

*"Allah! There is no God save Him.
His are the most beautiful names."*

NAMES

You have just read sura 20 verse 8 of the Qur'an, holy scripture of Islam, in the world-honored translation (1930) by Marmaduke Pickthall, a book often distributed for free at American Islamic centers. I love to compare the masterwork, in its vigor and beauty, with the Authorized English version of the Bible (the "King James" rendering of 1611). I see the Qur'an as implying a treatise on beauty and naming. The quoted words may be taken to summarize the entire document—insofar as it affects my daily life as poet. I find in the thought a fruitful paradox and a motivating guide.

Let's ponder the meaning and function of the "beautiful names." There are often said to be exactly ninety-nine names of God. But, as mystic Sufi Qur'an commentator Ibn Arabi reminds us, the nature of God, the essence of Ultimate Being, is not namable in the languages of mortals, not comprehensible or conveyable in limited, fallible vehicles of communication.

Our creaturely tools don't allow us to define or describe the Ultimate.

The ninety-nine descriptors of God are rubrics of the Ultimate's qualities or attributes, derivable from contemplating the endless worlds It fashions momentarily. These are valuable reminders, guides to contemplation. They do not name the Ultimate in its unknowable essential nature, but they may indeed suggest the numberless, powerful, tender expressions of that nature in the worlds we inhabit, for they are imaginative names, or metaphors. They fall short of their ultimate goal—Naming the Essence—but they provide a fertile means for us to expand our Imaginations to help comprehend what will always remain beyond grasp.

What are God's names, then? As I noted in the "Foreword," each is an approximator, imagination-expander, view-extender, capacity-stretcher. They are *metaphors*. And as the ultimate metaphor-crafting world imaginer, the Unnamable is *ultimate poet*.

All talk about the Ultimate is metaphor. "Ultimate poet" is also a metaphor. To use a singular or plural, a noun or verb or adjective, a gerund or participle, a gender or non-gender or possible infinite multiplicity of genders, to use the symbol of a human or a family member, even to use abstract categories such as "being" or "non-existence," will mean to grope, to reach, to wander, possibly stumbling but hopeful, ingeniously and with setbacks yet with ever added strength, amid metaphors, among fallible but heartening likenesses.

In *A Unifying Light* I wrote:

The uniting theme of likeness or symbolic metaphor, along with a related theme, the parable or exemplary narrative, is treated often in the Qur'an. The Hellenic-derived word

meta-phor means a bearing-beyond, while *sym-bol* means a throwing-together. Transcendences converge. Islamic statements on this topic may encourage the poet whose daily life is metaphor-making. Not only has Allah "coined for mankind in this Qur'an all kinds of similitudes" (30:58, 39:27), but He also treats, helpfully and often, the question of allegorical versus literal interpretation. The role of metaphor as a means of approaching Allah with the heart, mind, and spirit is central because the languages of mortals are finite and fallible, while ultimate Plenitude of Being is unutterable and inconceivable.

The leap from zero to one—from nothing to a thing—is only a single digit in arithmetic, but it feels like an infinity when qualitatively, ontologically considered. The grade-school pupil learns that $0 + 1 = 1$. But the poet, overwhelmed by the infinite distance in value between something and nothing at all, may prefer to write $0 + \text{Infinity} = 1$. Since our human speech cannot grasp, with concepts, the heart-stopping leap from zero to Being, from nothingness to worlds unnumbered, we have to use figurative, exploratory language. Likeness, emblem, and parable might guide us, in part, on the unmappable and shoreless ocean. We cannot avoid using *metaphor* (as evidenced in my "ocean"). But we can use it to the limit of our capacity for depth of feeling, breadth of comprehension, height of aspiring, deftness of naming.

The unifying potentials of metaphor, symbol, sign, portent, omen, and parable are explored with care in the Qur'an (2:164; 16:69; 17:89; 41:39; 39:17). In the last of these readings we learn that "His [Allah's] is the one Sublime Similitude in the heavens and in the earth."

The Sublime Similitude or Metaphoric Likeness of the Ultimate is the Pluriverse. It is refashioned every nanosecond of the day and night. Sufi mystic thinker Ibn Arabi (see *God*

the All-Imaginer) pictures the Ultimate as a disconsolate lover, who in the loneliness of having no one to love, breathed forth a World-Creative Sigh, the sigh of a lover, which gave birth to our entire created Pluriverse. Divine Breath could do this because it was the Power of Imagination, the Infinite Source of Infinite Life. The Ultimate played the role of the scriptural Lover King Solomon in "Song of Songs," and we are each the Shulamite, the Beloved, who He hopes will respond in love to the boundless love received. Viewed in this wonderful Sufi tradition, the entire Qur'an is a majestic love letter to the Hearer.

The Ultimate, as primal poet, has fashioned the One Sublime poem. To emulate that metaphoric act, become a master crafter! The field for exploration is infinite. As poet J. W. von Goethe says in the final lines of *Faust*, "Everything transient is but a likeness." Our pluriverse is an endless treasury of metaphors of Ultimate Being.

BEAUTY

Among the most often cited from the rich Islamic *hadith* tradition of memoir narratives is the saying, "God is beautiful and He loves beauty."

In the poem below (from my *God the All-Imaginer*), taking my cue from a statement by Johan Huizinga, I suggest that a helpful approximation to the Divine beauty might be the well-known formulation offered by St. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274), a thinker who flourished a few decades after Sufi commentator Ibn Arabi (1165-1220), and who is comparable to him in spiritual stature. St. Thomas, writing in Latin, offers three conceptual keys to beauty. These are *integritas*, *consonantia*, and *claritas*—completeness, harmony, and brightness.

On the Beauty of God in His Script

"Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty."

—*Hadith Sahih Muslim 911*

De Pulchritudine Dei et Venustate Mundi (On the Beauty of God and the Attractiveness of the World)

—*title of a book by Denis the Carthusian*

"Three things, says Saint Thomas, are required for beauty: first, integrity or perfection, because what is incomplete is ugly on that account; next, true proportion or consonance; lastly, brightness, because we call beautiful whatever has a brilliant color. Denis the Carthusian tries to apply these standards. [We] notice that nearly always when men of the Middle Ages attempt to express aesthetic enjoyment, their emotions are caused by sensations of luminous brightness or of lively movement."

—see J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Doubleday, 1954) 266-269

That God is beautiful Islamic teaching tells:
Completeness, Plenitude of Being—that is He;
Proportion, Consonance in Him will likewise be;
We Splendor call the light where moving life upwells.

Each word Qur'anic through calligraphy excels
In mirroring that wholeness, concord, brilliancy.
For every word is an artistic unity
Where letters harmonize, combine their beauty-spells.

Bright feeling from the lively movement in the realm
Of interacting letters well may overwhelm
The reader with a verve and surge: we fly and flow

And feel a new Becoming in the Being, so
That deepened by the wisdom, speeded by the flame
Of Spirit fast advancing, we will say His name.

Originally, I had dreamt it might be possible to offer tentative clarifications of the components of Beauty both in the Ultimate and in Its Pluriverse, but a re-reading of this poem brought quickly back to mind what I should never have forgotten: all talk about the Ultimate is metaphorical, symbolic, emblematic, allegorical. The categories merge and their boundaries disappear. What instantly awakened me was a realization that my entire poem could be read as an implicit metaphor of Beauty in God and World, namely the metaphor of the Sun. Verve and surge in a climactic flame—one recalls the many Qur'anic descriptions of Allah as "Cleaver of the Daybreak." I don't think my poem failed as a poem, but it offers no hope for a distinct delineation of subheadings for analysis, turning instead into metaphor.

THREE TYPES OF CONTEXT FOR "BEAUTIFUL NAMES"

My illustrative presentation of beautiful names in the context of diverse traditions will incorporate three approaches from different directions. But most of the 131 wordsongs will embody the technique that first "poetized" the Qur'an for me, a technique I later applied to both scholarly and memoir-narrative *hadith* passages, too. It's the method of the "fortune teller."

The Qur'an doesn't have a unifying narrative structure; instead, the revelations are arranged in order of size, from shortest to longest (except for the brief opening sura, a prayer that may serve as creed or musical theme for the whole scripture). This Qur'anic feature prompted me to open the book at random, read what I found, and do what my heart

told me. If imaginings, feeling, and thought sprang to mind, I wrote a lyric “reply,” or commentary, to the poem. If not, I’d close the book and try again.

I was a fortune teller, seeking supernal guidance with aid of chance or fate. Called “bibliomancy,” the technique has been employed by readers worldwide using the Jewish and Christian scriptures; by ancient Romans using Virgil’s epic poem *Aeneid*; and in twentieth-century Iran by readers of Hafiz’ anthology or *Divan*. When I wanted more information about a Qur’an excerpt, I would consult a scholar, such as Annemarie Schimmel, whose many books are fine tutorials. In Part 3 you’ll find more generalized considerations of varied features of Islam, often in dialogues with mentors, friends, colleagues.

“Dialogue” is the magic word. In the act of dialogue, of “interview,” of listening to your wise friend and then replying in melodic sounds from an overbrimming heart, you get to know both the person who sang or spoke to you and the context for an interpretation in the personality you encountered. By looking into the mirror you’ll never really discover how you look when you smile. But the person with whom you’re conversing in a mood of hilarity and affection will see and hear your soul in dialogue. My poems in this book are invariably commentaries on thoughts gained by research into what others have said.

In Part 1 of my fortune-telling book, then, I’ll dialogue or con-verse with random passages that attracted me from the Qur’an. It’s a journal, but with the hidden structure of a pilgrim’s journey. I will use the translation by Marmaduke Pickthall, an extraordinarily gifted writer. Many of his rendered passages are nearly poems already.

Next, in Part 2 I’ll be adding scholars’ and interpreters’ viewpoints when responding to a Qur’anic passage, in order

to situate it usefully in a context of valuable thought. The deep-hearted wisdom of the distinguished Islamologist Annemarie Schimmel is duly accredited and gratefully acknowledged.

In Part 3, the final group of lyrics, I write on a variety of Islam-related topics that gave rise to thoughtful song.

PURPOSE OF THE DIALOGIC BOOK

I keep in mind Qur'an 8:20, "Allah! There is no God save Him. His are the most beautiful names." Equally important is the *hadith* statement: "God is beautiful and He loves beauty." In this pattern of thinking, feeling, and imagining, Ultimate Being is the Ultimate name-giving metaphoric Poet, shining beacon for a human way of living. The Beauty in the worlds the Ultimate loves we enliven, increase, and help create when, emulating the Beauty of Its own imaginative power, we creatively respond with Love.

Seeking to describe helpfully the supreme beauty of Ultimate Being and of Its great "name" or metaphor the pluriverse, we always arrive at unknowable Mystery. But three imaginative ideals may help us approach it: "completeness, harmony, and radiance." I try to suggest life-guiding implications of these qualities in the phrase "wholeness, light, and concord." The two phrases encapsulate my poetic ideals in this book. Taken together, may they help me compose what I hope will be a fitting tribute to the Boundless and the Beating Heart.

NOTE ON ILLUSTRATIONS AND SUPPLEMENTAL APPENDICES

Shahid Alam, internationally acclaimed calligraphic artist, has allowed me to reproduce on the front and back cover of

this book the traditional 99 names of God as a work of art, and in Appendix II he offers background on the historical development of these. The names appear on stained glass windows—a unique presentation. (They are in fact the sole ornament of the civic cemetery for the town of Alzey, Germany, where I went to see them.) Shahid Alam also offers definitions of the names.

The frontispiece, “Ar-Raḥim,” or “The Merciful,” offers a sample of Shahid Alam’s beautiful calligraphic work in black and white. I love the presentation, for surely Mercy is an expression of Beauty in the realm of Goodness. Every sura (chapter or canto) of the Qur’an begins “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful” (Pickthall translation). Regarding this formula, the Sufis teach that the reason we say “the Beneficent, the Merciful” 114 times in the 114 suras but we never say “the Just” is that on any occasion when a tension or conflict may seem to arise between God’s mercy and His judgment, Mercy outweighs Judgment.

Prof. Dr. Taha Ibrahim Ahmed Badri, Professor of German Literary Studies and Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Al-Azhar University, Nasr City—Cairo—Egypt, offers, in Appendix I, a presentation of passages and sayings relating to God and Beauty in the Qur’an, in the hadiths of the Sunna, and in popular Arab proverbs and sayings. All these quoted materials contain an abundance of beauty and truth.

I have translated both appendices from the German and want to express deep gratitude for the pleasure and wisdom imparted by them.

PART 1



Lyrical Responses to the Qur'an

1.
LYRICAL RESPONSE TO SURA 1
"THE OPENING"

viewed in a calligraphic presentation by Shahid Alam

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful,

1. *Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,*
2. *The Beneficent, the Merciful,*
3. *Owner of the Day of Judgment,*
4. *(Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help.*
5. *Show us the straight path,*
6. *The path of those whom Thou hast favored;*
7. *Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those
who go astray.*

"The Opening," which for the Muslim has acquired
The same importance "Hear, O Israel" for the Jew,
"Our Father" for the Christian have, a heart inspired
To make, 'mid sunlike yellow based on green, a new

And finer pyramid to show, in shape of flame
And of the prayer-thought that we upon the way
Of those whom Allah loved may walk, not led astray
But worshipping the One of Whom the sura's claim

Is clear: the Lord of Worlds. We ask upon the straight
And brightest road to go (by mercy judged aright),
The path of life (the Prophet's color green) that shows

The upward aim of fire and tree alike—to Light,
To Him we chant, as nightingale to fragrant rose,
And gain in spirit-arms the calm that we await.

2.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 2 "THE COW"

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. Alif, Lām, Mîm.

If we look to the nature of the sounds which the letters represent, A is a breathing and comes from the throat, L is a lingual-palatal dental sound from the middle of the mouth, and M is a labial or lip-sound. Can we not take them as symbolical of the Beginning, Middle and End? [A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur'ân 17 n25]

Six chapters, only, start
With riddling A, L, M:
Alî considers them
A metaphoric part

Of godly doctrine, heart
Of holy mystery:
Divine totality
In space and time they chart.

The A, U, M we find,
When Hindus chant, this kind
Of teaching summarize.

Non-dual is the way
We feel, they like to say
With deepened, quiet eyes.

External world-array
Will opened mouth express
In Ah (our letter "A").

26 Martin Bidney

Closed lips together press
In M, the "inner I"
That equally we bless.

Transition-tone whereby
From out to in we go
Is U. In three will lie

The Unity we know:
Creator, Soul are one—
Omega, Alpha show

The big-and-little sun:
Distinction is undone.

3.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
FROM SURA 2 "THE COW"

48. *And guard yourselves against a day when no soul will in
aught avail another, nor will intercession be accepted from
it, nor will compensation be received from it, nor will they
be helped.*

The warning sounded yet empowers me:
No other spirit will in aught avail
When I, who am divinely dowered, fail:
I must take thought—the gift of dignity,

As here implicitly the Prophet taught,
Should be extended to humanity
In every breast. More brave it is to be
More strong in will to praise what Allah wrought.

By no redeemer is our grace rebought,
Nor savior comes to compensate for me,
Nor will my face before the Highest pale,

Nor ever helper guide me through a gale,
Nor liberator rescue me when caught,
Nor intercessor aid: my heart is free.

4.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 2 "THE COW"

155. *And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the steadfast,*

156. *Who say, when a misfortune striketh them: Lo! we are Allah's and lo! unto Him we are returning.*

157. *Such are they on whom are blessings from their Lord, and mercy. Such are the rightly guided.*

177. *It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing.*

And surely we shall try you, something show of fear and hunger,

And loss of wealth and lives, and yet glad tidings to the steadfast!

For those who say when troubling fortune striketh, We are Allah's

And unto Him are we returning, on the like will blessings
Come from their Lord, the merciful. Such are the rightly
guided.

It is not righteousness to East or West to turn your faces,
But upright, rather, is the one who, steadfastly believing
In Allah and the Final Day, the angels and the Scriptures,

Will give his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to
orphans,
The needy and the stranger on the way and folk requesting,
And who all slaves will free and who, observing proper
worship,
Will pay the poor-due—they the ones who truly keep their
treaty
Whenever one is made—and who have known the strength
of patience
In tribulation and adversity and time of tension:
The earnest heart is deep, sincere, God-honoring, God-
fearing.

5.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 2 "THE COW" AND
SURA 22 "THE PILGRIMAGE"

2:197. The pilgrimage is (in) the well-known months, and whoever is minded to perform the pilgrimage therein (let him remember that) there is (to be) no lewdness nor abuse nor angry conversation on the pilgrimage. And whatsoever good ye do Allah knoweth it. So make provision for yourself (hereafter); for the best provision is to ward off evil. Therefore keep your duty unto Me, O men of understanding.

22:27. And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine.

28. That they may witness things that are of benefit to them, and mention the name of Allah on appointed days over the beast of cattle that He hath bestowed upon them. Then eat thereof and feed therewith the poor unfortunate.

29. Then let them make an end of their unkemptness and pay their vows and go around the ancient House.

The Pilgrimage to all proclaim:
They'll come on foot and camels lean,
From plain and valley and ravine,
To view the place of blessed name.

Nor lewdness or abuse or shame,
Nor angry talk, not aught of mean
Endeavor, speech. Let then be seen
Benefit, merit, fair of fame.

The beast of cattle God will grant;
Accept it, eat in cheer thereof;
Be sure to feed the poor with love.

Be diligent to pay your vows,
And go around the Ancient House,
And, bowing, pray to One Above.

6.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
FROM SURA 2 "THE COW"

*261. A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving
followed by injury. Allah is Absolute, Clement.*

Whoever would extend a gift and follow it
With injury? If Allah's favor he would seek,
His inconsistent conduct surely were a weak
And lapsing pretense, well unmasking thoughts unfit.

Suppose, though, that the gift and injury are kept
Apart some length of time, for days, or even years?
A parent may be generous, yet, when he fears
Abandonment, an Iblis-envy may have leapt

Before he knew it into spirit unalert—
And then, indignant and offended, he will blurt
Aspersions: "Do you thus repay what I have done!?"—

Don't follow generosity with malison ...
Your child can't pay you back the life that he received—
So let him pay it forward; minds will be relieved.

7.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 2 "THE COW"

*271. If ye publish your almsgiving, it is well, but if ye hide it
and give it to the poor, it will be better for you, and will
atone for some of your ill-deeds. Allah is Informed of what
ye do.*

To give your alms in public—that is well,
But if you hide your giving to the poor,
The merit that is reckoned will be pure
And of atonement for your sins will tell.

The Hebrew sage we call Maimonides
Has made distinctions similar to these:
Nor gift nor giver known we better call
Than if your giving published be to all.

The Preacher, too, had asked you, Cast your bread
Upon the water, that by alms be fed
The hungry who will get them when you're gone.

For benefactions that are carried on
The while the Donor may remain unviewed
Are like the Noah-rainbow splendor-hued.

8.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 3 "THE FAMILY OF 'IMRÂN"

35. *(Remember) when the wife of 'Imrân said: My Lord! I have vowed unto Thee that which is in my belly as a consecrated (offering). Accept it from me. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower!*
44. *This of the tidings of things hidden. We reveal it unto thee (Muhammad). . . .*
45. *(And remember) when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near (unto Allah).*
46. *He will speak unto mankind in his cradle and in his manhood, and he is of the righteous. [. .]*
48. *And He will teach him the Scripture and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel,*
49. *And will make him a messenger unto the children of Israel, (saying): Lo! I come unto you with a sign from your Lord. Lo! I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it and it is a bird, by Allah's leave. I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead, by Allah's leave. . . .*

Pure Mary's mother, 'Imrân's wife, entreated
That God accept her child as consecrated.
And then, as angels came to her, elated,
They with a prophecy the Virgin greeted:

Messiah Jesus will be born to you!
In cradle and in manhood he'll have taught
The scripture, wisdom, Torah, Gospel, aught
That Allah thought it fit if people knew.

And he for you will fashion out of clay
The likeness of a bird: 'twill fly away!
And this will happen, all, by Allah's leave.

The blind, the leper nevermore shall grieve,
For he will heal them, and will raise the dead,
For he is righteous, and divinely led.

9.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 5 "THE TABLE SPREAD"

27. *But recite unto them with truth the tale of the two sons of Adam, how they offered each a sacrifice, and it was accepted from the one of them and it was not accepted from the other. (The one) said: I will surely kill thee. (The other) answered: Allah accepteth only from those who ward off (evil).*
28. *Even if thou stretch out thy hand against me to kill me, I shall not stretch out my hand against thee to kill thee, lo! I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.*
29. *Lo! I would rather thou shouldst bear the punishment of the sin against me and thine own sin and become one of the owners of the fire. That is the reward of evil-doers.*
30. *But (the other's) mind imposed on him the killing of his brother, so he slew him and became one of the losers.*

The one who offered gifts in pride
Unwisely sky-advice denied.
The mind that victory had willed
Defied the wiser guide it killed.

How many times the grace refusers
Immired in hate became the losers!
The son who failed to fear his Sire
Is owner of the searing fire.

The force in mind that, mortal, rose
The portal of the heart to close
Would best have acted lancing first
The cancer pride, before it burst!

Resentment smothered him that slew
His brother when it hid from view

In heat and fever, Iblis-wooers,
A truth denied by evil-doers:

When violence will violate
What kindnesses on high create,
The grace of Him that lives above
We have defaced, defying love.

10.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE IN
SURA 5 "THE TABLE SPREAD"

48. And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and a watcher over it. So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which hath come unto thee. For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ.

True scripture but confirms the truth that came
Before it, guarding, watching as it grows.
One acts according to the best one knows;
Of laws divine no follower I blame.

These heaven roads, the traced-out ways we name,
Are many, and are favored by the Lord.
Diverse communities may well accord
If they but vie for that which all acclaim:

Good works to do, where spirit will have soared,
Humanity to aid, for whom arose
In mountain cave what Gabriel in flame

Had shown the Prophet (blest in flight and fame!)
Unlettered, Heaven helping to disclose
The moral light that leads to our reward.

11.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE IN
SURA 5 "THE TABLE SPREAD"

90. *O ye who believe! . . . [I]dols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed.*

O faithful, idly shapen idols and divining arrows
Are little but an infamy of Satan's handiwork;
Distraction, the impure allurements which therein can lurk,
May well become the malediction that, in wilding,
narrows.

Subservience to fortune is harassing and it harrows;
The brightness in a flighty mood full soon may turn to murk;
What favor do you gain in haughty idols' awful smirk?
No artificial heartener will eagles make of sparrows.

The wise will study art and science—deep-rewarding deed—
For these will heighten heart and mind, fulfil the ardor-need
Of those in whom there grows the holy word that when we
heed

We in the cold of light-defying void between the stars
And in the heat of meteors and in the crystal spars
And in the dark of quiet night view spirit-avatars.

12.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE IN
SURA 5 "THE TABLE SPREAD"

110. . . . *O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember . . . how thou didst
shape of clay as it were the likeness of a bird by My
permission, and didst blow upon it and it was a bird
by My permission. . . .*

Is it but willful whimsy? Early I awoke
And so am ready to begin my busy day—
And yet my fingers twitch and tremble, saying, Stay!
If you're *retired*, you needn't strive, as other folk,

To bow to one you're "working for," unkindly joke.
Be mindful that your effort animate the soul
Reborn, this early morn. Enhance the poet-role:
Turn not away from play, the waiting flame restoke,

So that you feel, while teasing keys, a masterstroke
Of sweeter favor, stride unfearing toward a goal
While by a smile heliacal are cast away

Encroaching cold and noisome void with piercing ray
Of daybreak; and a saying write that like an oak
May spread a shelter, mental healing making way.

What have I done in these, the words you heard above
But say, within my nerves, Be active? and command
My fingers: Heed caprice? And yet we understand
A faith in Him, the Daybreak, as a waiting love

That, maybe seeming idle, yet when thinking of
The spirit-filling will, had let his fingers and
His whim combine (I speak of Jesus) when he scanned
The deep of symbol: clay became a flying dove

Arising from a playful making by a hand
Enlivened by the heat that round the heads would dance
Of twelve disciples freed in fire, the countenance
Of radiant Moses then recalling, and the awe

That Miriam with timbrel moved to psalm; she saw
The aura that, auroral, wide horizon spanned.

13.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 6 "CATTLE"

7. Had we sent down unto thee (Muhammad) (actual) writing upon parchment, so that they could feel it with their hands, those who disbelieve would have said: This is naught else than mere magic.

10. Messengers (Of Allah) have been derided before thee, but that whereat they scoffed surrounded such of them as did deride.

If bearing parchment to the lands
Of froward men with horrid frown
He'd gone, that they with eager hands
Might feel it, as the man demands
 Who, cowardly, looks down

And never, rather, lets the eye
Traverse, around him, verdant field
And sloping hill and smiling sky
And olden forest growth whereby
 The light and darkness yield

Their charms in rainbow spectrum blent
That spread the realm of Allah's eyes
In Orient and Occident
To which the Prophet-Word was sent
 In wonder-working wise,

"Mere magic!" would the doubters who
In hapless ignorance abide
Protèst, not realizing You
Were testing, though beyond the view
 Of such as would deride.

Who open-hearted look around
What no one can with parchment prove
Will see and feel: from out the ground
The Sufi sprouts are roused, unbound—
Winds dervish-whirling move.

14.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 6 "CATTLE"

8. *They say: Why hath not an angel been sent down unto him?
If We sent down an angel, then the matter would be judged:
no further time would be allowed them (for reflection).*
9. *Had We appointed an angel (Our messenger), We assuredly
had made him (as) a man (that he might speak to men); and
(thus) obscured for them (the truth) they (now) obscure.*

The doubter, foundering in fear,
Requested that an angel come
To make the message ever clear;
Yet, were it done, the skeptic here
 Were rendered deaf, struck dumb.

We, dying, if with yearning eye,
Are made by rays eternal blind:
The infinite, beyond the sky,
Behind the veil will always lie
 That, finite, we shall find.

An angel that would speak to men
Would more a man than angel be;
Yet less will I be ravished when
By word discernible I ken
 A mind akin to me.

"Let there be light," we may suppose
The Lord, auroral-bright, to say,
But Night, reluctant to disclose
How from the chaos glory rose
 A key has kept away.

Yet Goodness, Beauty, Truth arise
In Prophet- and in Poet-face
To show in kindly, holy eyes
The force that muted night belies
 In music, Rumi-grace.

15.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 6 "CATTLE"

*38. There is not an animal in the earth, nor a flying creature
flying on two wings, but they are peoples like unto you. We
have neglected nothing in the Book (of Our decrees). Then
unto their Lord they will be gathered.*

The peoples of the animals of earth,
Communities that fly upon their wings,
Are reckoned in the Book of Our Decrees
And will at last be gathered to their Lord.

Of social skill behold no death or dearth
Among the creatures that the Prophet sings
And whom with arm outstretched the psalmer sees:
Be by that sight to moral health restored.

May choiring birds contribute to your mirth,
And let the eagle vigor-will that flings
An ardor on an eager mate with ease
A life-instilling impulse, too, afford:

Your mind be destined to a blest rebirth
Prepared for unconcluded journeyings,
In pairs, comrades, sodalities
Portraying ways that God His love outpoured.

16.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 6 "CATTLE"

159. *Wait they, indeed, for nothing less than that the angels should come unto them, or thy Lord should come, or there should come one of the portents from the Lord? In the day when one of the portents from thy Lord cometh, its belief availeth naught a soul which therefore believed not, nor in its belief earned good (by works). Say: Wait ye! Lo! We (too) are waiting.*

It doesn't pay to keep awaiting striking signs.
With con-fid-ence in eye, a *fid-es*, the belief
In seeing, you'll acquire the vision that divines
When in-sight views, within, what rays convey. A thief

Of confidence I call mere blank expectancy:
Perception will presume an *effort* on your part.
So idly waiting for an angel seems to me
A dereliction of the duty of the heart.

Related is the faith in readiness to act:
Be *fac-tor*, maker: what you make will be the "fact,"
The *fac-tum*, what is done, result of something made.

Cum àgo gratia, I'm "agent," unafraid:
Belief in "deed" is what indeed by work will earn
Delight more great than angel-sight for which you yearn.

17.
LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 6 "CATTLE"

161. Whoso bringeth a good deed will receive tenfold the like thereof, while whoso bringeth an ill deed will be awarded but the like thereof; and they will not be wronged.

This cannot be a literal description of the fate
Of spirits who for grace upon their Lord in Heaven wait
Since He, the King of Pardon, equal recompense for ill
Not always granting, rather may a mercy-plea fulfill.

I'd like to read the moral here in allegoric wise;
It does convey a valid dispensation from the skies
But not as if by utterance of kingly high decree:
Instead, the law proclaimed is written deep in you, in me.

They say that virtue is its own reward; we're learning more:
We're recompensed with grace, made tenfold richer than
before.

As for the pay for evil ways of being, we will find
We get the wages that we gave, our indignation blind.

Our work-intensive anger will deplete us, and it takes
An equal payment every time for each of our mistakes.
Our wrath is ever error: we more wisely would invest
In tenfold growth our energy, and love the holiest.

18.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
FROM SURA 7 "THE HEIGHTS"

22. . . . And their Lord called them, (saying): Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you: Lo! Satan is an open enemy to you?
23. They said: Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, surely we are of the lost!
24. He said: Go down (from hence), one of you a foe unto the other. There will be for you on earth a habitation and provision for a while.
25. He said: there shall ye live, and there shall ye die, and thence shall ye be brought forth.
26. O children of Adam! We have revealed unto you raiment to conceal your shame, and splendid vesture, but the raiment of restraint from evil, that is best. . . .

They have wronged themselves by sin.
Are they of the lost? For in
Their abandonment of trust
They were avid for the dust.

Punishment? They'll be the foes
Of each other, for they chose
Allah's law to disregard:
Long will be their road and hard.

Vesture may their shame conceal,
Yet they'll nakedly reveal
Enmity until they test

Daily strength to keep from taint
What remains of Eden's best
With the raiment of restraint.

19.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 7 "THE HEIGHTS"

*50. And the dwellers of the Fire cry out unto the dwellers of the
Garden: Pour on us some water or some of that wherewith
Allah hath provided you. . . .*

The dwellers in aspiring Fire
And dwellers in the mental Garden
A war of form with wild desire,
Of rending force in strife with pardon,

Will fight until the end of days
And bear the burning and the burden
While guards upon the Angel Ways
Deny the parched their water guerdon.

Rabi'a bore a flaming brand—
And bucket, in her other hand,
Containing water, showing well

She hoped to drown the heat of hell
And sweeten heaven with the burning
That seers feel, for Eden yearning.

20.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURAS 7 "THE HEIGHTS,"
33 "THE CLAINS," 59 "EXILE"

7:143. *And when Moses came to Our appointed tryst and his Lord had spoken unto him, he said: My Lord! Show me (Thy self), that I may gaze upon Thee. He said: Thou wilt not see Me, but gaze upon the mountain! If it stand still in its place, then thou wilt see Me. And when the Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down. And Moses fell down senseless. And when he woke he said: glory unto Thee! I turn unto Thee repentant, and I am the first of (true) believers.*

33:73. *Lo! We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo! he hath proved a tyrant and a fool.*

59:21. *If We had caused this Qur'ân to descend upon a mountain, thou (O Muhammad) verily hadst seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of Allah. Such similitudes coin We for mankind that haply they may reflect.*

The glory of the Lord in tryst upon the mount,
The trust He offered to the summit as a gift,
The holy work that He created, us to lift
To Him, Who turns the hill to dust—a triple fount

Of wisdom all must fear who lack the human will
That, based upon our freedom (terrifying!), can
Destroy the boy, or make a prophet of the man:
We, magian, image the Creator Who could fill

The world by word, the night by light, the seething sea
Of gloom by tide of moon, with gleaming, breathing glee,
At last the Adam-man with brilliant liberty

To name the angels and himself, his goal to be
Each moment redefined in heart and mind, that he,
Divining his potential, feel divinely free.

21.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
FROM SURA 7 "THE HEIGHTS"

205. *And do thou (O Muhammad) remember thy Lord within
thyself humbly and with awe, below thy breath, at morn and
evening. And be not thou of the neglectful.*

206. *Lo! those who are with thy Lord are not too proud to do
Him service, but they praise Him and adore Him.*

Do thou remember now thy Lord
Humbly within thyself, with awe,
Below thy breath, at morn and eve.
Be not of them who show neglect,
For those who with thy Lord remain
To serve Him well are not too proud.

The central memory well stored
More deep than breathing is a law
That, humbly standing under, we've
More wholly understood. Reflect
That depth is guarantee of gain:
The undersoul is all-endowed.

The dark and light, our rhythm-ward,
Poetic meters oversaw
To render what our breaths believe
In heartbeat steadiness, connect
Our timing and our triumph, twain
The guidance of the brave unbowed.

Below our breathing, an accord
Symmetrical may banish flaw;
'Mid all that would berate, bereave
Or devastate, let man, erect,
Lend thanks for being grateful: plain
Our plan, we follow fire and cloud.

22.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 8 "SPOILS OF WAR"

26. *And remember, when ye were few and reckoned feeble in the land, and were in fear lest men should extirpate you, how He gave you refuge, and strengthened you with His help, and made provision of good things for you, that haply ye might be thankful.*
27. *O ye who believe! Betray not Allah and His messenger, nor knowingly betray your trusts.*
28. *And know that your possessions and your children are a test, and that with Allah is immense reward.*

Remember, when ye were but few
And reckoned feeble in the land,
He'd offer with a helping hand
Provision of good things for you

And, strengthening your hope, renew
Your will to follow His command:
Be faithful to your trust. Who stand
Upon that Rock will Eden view.

Your many blessings are a test,
For he alone will use them best
Who knows that an immense reward

When wealth is spent for heav'n will come:
Be thankful that, in halidom,
The spirit will defeat the sword.

23.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 12 "JOSEPH"

36. *And two young men went to prison with [Joseph]. One of them said: I dreamed that I was pressing wine. The other said: I dreamed that I was carrying upon my head bread whereof the birds were eating. Announce unto us the interpretation, for we see thee of those good (at interpretation).*
37. *He said: The food which ye are given (daily) shall not come unto you but I shall tell you the interpretation ere it cometh unto you. This is of that which my Lord hath taught me. Lo! I have forsaken the religion of folk who believe not in Allah and are disbelievers in the Hereafter.*
41. *O my two fellow-prisoners! As for one of you, he will pour out wine for his lord to drink; and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will eat from his head. Thus is the case judged concerning which ye did inquire.*
42. *And he said unto him of the twain who he knew would be released: Mention me in the presence of thy lord. But Satan caused him to forget to mention it to his lord, so he (Joseph) stayed in prison for some years.*

It seems the one was evil and the other, good;
The future deemed for each would be for both condign.
The answers to the riddles Joseph might divine
And, strengthened then by Allah, make them understood.

We cannot know the men; there's little more we could
Uncover by examining the apt design
The visions manifested, as to Joseph's eyne
They opened up. Yet, as interpreters, we should

Discern what we can learn, and firm conclusion draw:
The candor, boldness here displayed elicit awe,
And nothing could be farther from the artful guile

We find in Joseph's cunning brothers' lying style.
He simply told the truth; I love him, unafraid,
And so have told, as he, a tale in candor made.

24.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
FROM SURA 12 "JOSEPH"

91. *Go with this shirt of mine and lay it on my father's face, he will become (again) a seer; and come to me with all your folk.*
94. *When the caravan departed their father had said: Truly I am conscious of the breath of Joseph, though ye call me dotard.*
95. *(Those around him) said: By Allah, lo! thou art in thine old aberration.*
96. *Then, when the bearer of glad tidings came, he laid it on his face and he became a seer once more. He said: Said I not unto you that I know from Allah that which ye know not?*
102. *This is of the tidings of the Unseen which We inspire in thee (Muhammad).*

I am conscious of the breath of Joseph, dotard though you call me:

Bold as water ever flowing under Gardens of Delight
Feeling heat of high eternal Sun beneath the icy night
To the Lord a vernal wealth outpouring, fear will not appall me.

I am conscious of the breath of Joseph though you try to shame me:

As by wettened shirt with mercy health-invested is the earth
When infused with holy dewy breath it grows, renewed in birth,
So you do me honor only, though you faithless would defame me.

Though you dotard call me, by the breath of Joseph I
awaken:

As in cardamom and spikenard, in balsam and in myrrh,
All the spices of the spring within the bursting earth astir,
For the Lord my soul's beloved is my burning thirst
unslaken.

Though you dotard call me, by the breath of Joseph I
engender

In the spirit of my hearer the embrace of daily praise
When my hands with gratitude for maker-strength endued
I raise

In the bliss of blessed yearning to proclaim the Great
Surrender.

25.

LYRICAL RESPONSE VERSES
TO SURA 12 "JOSEPH"

93. *Go with this shirt of mine and lay it on my father's face, he will become (again) a seer; and come to me with all your folk.*
94. *When the caravan departed their father had said: Truly I am conscious of the breath of Joseph, though ye call me dotard.*
95. *(Those around him) said: By Allah, lo! thou art in thine old aberration.*
96. *Then, when the bearer of glad tidings came, he laid it on his face and he became a seer once more. He said: Said I not unto you that I know from Allah that which ye know not?*
97. *They said: O our father! Ask forgiveness of our sins for us, for lo! we were sinful.*
98. *He said: I shall ask forgiveness for you of my Lord: Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.*
99. *And when they came in before Joseph, he took his parents unto him, and said: Come into Egypt safe, if Allah will!*
100. *And he placed his parents on the daïs and they fell down before him prostrate, and he said: O my father! This is the interpretation of my dream of old. My Lord hath made it true, and he hath shown me kindness, since He took me out of the prison and hath brought you from the desert after Satan had made strife between me and my brethren. Lo! my Lord is tender unto whom He will. He is the Knower, the Wise.*
101. *O my Lord! Thou hast given me (something) of sovereignty and hast taught me (something) of the interpretation of events—Creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my Protecting Friend in the world and the Hereafter. Make me to die submissive (unto Thee) and join me to the righteous.*

The father felt the breath of Joseph ev'n before
The prophet-shirt was lent him by the latter's grace—
I picture vividly the smile upon his face!
The cunning sons are awed; their father will restore

To these such ample favor, he will ask the Lord
That they be pardoned who their brother in the pit
Had left. Though Joseph might have died, he thinks of it
As now forgiven. With a welcoming accord,

He copies the example of his father wise,
Who for his sons had asked a pardon from the skies.
For Jacob, Joseph know the loving tenderness

Of Allah in the heav'n the humble soul would bless.
They'll both be helped to die submissive unto Him,
'Mid choiring righteous aided by the seraphim.

26.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
FROM SURA 13 "THE THUNDER"

15. *And unto Allah falleth prostrate whosoever is in the
heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, as do their
shadows in the morning and the evening hours.*

Remindful is the shadow of the time of prayer
In morning as at even, dawn of ladder-fire
Whereon the angels climb ascending to their Sire,
The Cleaver of the Daybreak, as in upper air

The birds by unseen compass guided by desire
In quiet, verve alerted, as in dancing where
The dervish wing-sleeve, widened waving over fair
And greening holy field, will signal to the choir;

And when at dusk the yearning, humbled, who aspire,
By heavy labor wearied, prostrate to the Higher,
A late autumnal shadow falling, rapt in rare

Emollient of calming psalm, in praise declare
That, while the Lord will love, the soul will never tire
But lunar-, tulip-herald mercy will require.

27.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURAS 15 "AL-HIJR," 21 "THE
PROPHETS," 22 "THE PILGRIMAGE"

*15:45. Lo! those who ward off (evil) are among gardens and
watersprings.*

*21:30. Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens
and earth were of one piece, then We parted them, and We
made every living thing of water? Will they not then believe?*

*22:23. Lo! Allah will cause those who believe and do good
works to enter Gardens underneath which rivers flow,
wherein they will be allowed armlets of gold, and pearls,
and their raiment therein will be silk. 25. . . the inviolable
Place of Worship . . . We have appointed for mankind
together, the dweller therein and the nomad. . .*

Few lauded more the biblical and scripture paradise
Than they who, avid, heard Muhammad in the desert. We,
Nomadic in imagination, picture fleetingly
Expanding, ample Eden-green with gladdened Arab eyes:

The founts bring water-pearls that mirror jewels from the sea.
Amid, immense, the shifting sand-drift, whence there will arise
What metaphoric wealth in buried, moving river lies,
Providing for the raiment of the wise the silkworm tree.

In smoothly streaming weave recline in hues of bloom the blest,
Their sleeves of gold adorning them with gleam of morning ray
To emblem daily glory-waking of the Holiest.

The learning mind of roaming men may here a thirst allay
Yet reawakened by the allegorical array
Of splendor wide outspread, unending, in oasal rest.

28.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 16 "THE BEE"

65. *Allah sendeth down water from the sky and therewith
reviveth the earth after her death. Lo! herein is indeed a
portent for a folk who hear.*
66. *And lo! in the cattle there is a lesson for you. We give you
to drink of that which is in their bellies, from betwixt the
refuse and the blood, pure milk palatable to the drinkers.*
67. *And of the fruits of the date-palm, and grapes, whence ye
derive strong drink and (also) good nourishment. Lo! therein,
is indeed a portent for people who have sense.*
68. *And thy Lord inspired the bee, saying: choose thou
habitations in the hills and in the trees and in that which
they thatch;*
69. *Then eat of all fruits, and follow the ways of thy Lord,
made smooth (for thee). There cometh forth from their bellies
a drink diverse of hues, wherein is healing for mankind. Lo!
herein is indeed a portent for people who reflect.*

In Allah's Eden rivers, too,
Wine, water, honey, milk appear,
And there's a parable for you.

A kindred nourishment is dear
That lends, and comes from, life, that we
May health imbibe in liquid clear.

The colored flowers let the bee
Make honey yellow, brown or tan
Or white; a multiplicity

In fragrance, changing flavor, can
Variety in harmony
Teach Lady Eve and Adam-Man.

29.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 17 "THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL"

26. *Give to the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the
wayfarer, and squander not (thy wealth) in wantonness.*
27. *Lo! the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils, and the
devil was ever an ingrate to his Lord.*
28. *But if thou turn away from them, seeking mercy from thy
Lord, for which thou hopest, then speak unto them a
reasonable word.*
29. *And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it
with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked,
denuded.*
35. *Fill the measure when ye measure, and weigh with a right
balance; that is meet, and better in the end.*

Let your measures and your balances be level,
Let your gift with others' need be in accord.
Lo! the squanderers are brothers of the devil,
And the devil is an ingrate to the Lord.

Let the squanderer and miser be evaded
Who the balancing of need and present spoil:
They are each the other's nemesis, for aided
By the spendthrift is the hoarder in his toil.

Turn away from them; in Allah seek for mercy;
Yet refuse them not a reasonable word.
Though a sinner may be worshiping the purse he
Is a human being still; let this be heard.

To the kinsman and the needy and the stranger
Give but squander not your wealth in wantonness.
The rewarded of the Lord are safe from danger,
And the helpers of their fellows let Him bless.

30.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES FROM
SURA 17 "THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL"

78. *Establish worship at the going down of the sun until the dark of night, and (the recital of) the Qur'ân at dawn. Lo! (the recital of) the Qur'ân at dawn is ever witnessed.*
79. *And some part of the night awake for it, a largess for thee. It may be that thy Lord wil raise thee to a praised estate.*

Five prayers God ordained the faithful daily say:
When sun has just begun to bend from summit; then
Late afternoon; when comes the dusk; and fourthly, when
The solar glow is darkened at the end of day;

Again, by dawn arising, eagerly we pray.
The Prophet, though, was blessed more than other men
And told to wake in hours of darkest night, unpen
The sighing, longing cry that on the soul might weigh.

No mortal man would ever know the sacred night
So well as he that traveled on the steed of light
And spheres of heaven saw; at nighttime in a cave

A helper wonder-skill to him, unlettered, gave
To read the wisdom scripture that the man would raise
Past flaming angels to estate of greater praise.

31.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 17 "THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL"

88. *Say: Verily, though mankind and the Jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'ân, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another.*
 89. *And verily We have displayed for mankind in this Qur'ân all kinds of similitudes, but most of mankind refuse aught save disbelief.*
 90. *And they say: We will not put faith in thee till thou cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us;*
 91. *Or thou have a garden of date-palms and grapes, and cause rivers to gush forth therein abundantly;*
 92. *Or thou cause the heaven to fall upon us piecemeal, as thou hast pretended, or bring Allah and the angels as a warrant;*
 93. *Or thou have a house of gold; or thou ascend up into heaven, and even then we will put no faith in thine ascension till thou bring down for us a book that we can read. . . .*

When skeptics would the Prophet chide,
 They rived in similitudes
 A higher grace and, staging feuds,
 Declined to face what he'd provide.

With gushing spring and heaven-fall,
 A house of gold, ascent to sky,
 A date-palm garden, grapes and all
 The host of angels, they would vie

With him in imaging a bliss.
 And yet a lesson here they miss,
 For the significance of this

Grand amplitude and panoply—
 Superb, upbursting imagery—
 In the Qur'an we first can see.

32.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 18 "THE CAVE"

13. *We narrate unto thee their story with truth. Lo! they were young men who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance.*
14. *And We made firm their hearts when they stood forth and said: Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We cry unto no god beside Him, for then should we utter an enormity.*
15. *These, our people, have chosen (other) gods beside Him though they bring no clear warrant (vouchsafed) to them. And who doth greater wrong than he who inventeth a lie concerning Allah?*
16. *And when ye withdraw from them and that which they worship except Allah, then seek refuge in the Cave; your Lord will spread for you of His mercy and will prepare for you a pillow in your plight.*
18. *And thou wouldst have deemed them waking though they were asleep, and we caused them to turn over to the right and the left, and their dog stretching out his paws on the threshold.*

The Lord in Whom their souls delight
Prepared a pillow in their plight
Within a cave. So Jacob laid
His head upon a rock. Arrayed

In heaven light there came to him
The ladder-stepping seraphim.
Protected now in kindred way
These men their troubles down will lay.

When tales of dream and sleep are done
We feel a secret, darker sun
That, like the hidden lunar side,

Will in our widened sky abide
To make in mind a presence known—
Our soul refreshed, no more alone.

33.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 18 "THE CAVE"

33. *Coin . . . a similitude: Two men, unto one of whom We had assigned two gardens of grapes, and We had surrounded both with date-palms and had put between them tillage.*
34. *Each of the gardens gave its fruit and withheld naught thereof. And We caused a river to gush forth therein.*
35. *And he had fruit. And he said unto his comrade, when he spake with him: I am more than thee in wealth, and stronger in respect of men.*
36. *And he went into his garden, while he (thus) wronged himself. He said: I think not that all this will ever perish.*

When "I am more than thee in wealth
And stronger in respect of men"
The neighbor claimed, so haughty, then
He had impaired the moral health

Of cleansing air by thought of pelf
And soon the fruit impure would find,
The tillage going ill, so blind
He was, for he had wronged himself.

"I think not all of this will die":
His idle cry in rival pride
He'd find by skiey might belied.

Our vineyard, river, date-palm trees
Their call for grateful hymnodies
Upraise: may we in light reply.

34.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 19 "MARY"

16. *And make mention of Mary in the Scripture, when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking East,*
17. *And had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her Our spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man.*
18. *She said: Lo! I seek refuge in the Beneficent One from thee, if thou art God-fearing.*
19. *He said: I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a faultless son.*
20. *She said: How can I have a son when no mortal hath touched me, neither have I been unchaste?*
21. *He said: So (it will be). Thy Lord saith: It is easy for Me. And (it will be) that We may make of him a revelation for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained.*

Withdrawing from her people to a chamber looking East,
The Virgin long remained secluded; Allah sent to her
His spirit that assumed the likeness of a perfect man.
"I seek protective refuge in the One Beneficent,"

Said Mary, "if you fear the Lord; let every threat have ceased."
"I am a faithful messenger of Him, to Whom defer
The praising angels, for on you a faultless son I can
Bestow." "But how, indeed? No mortal any touch has lent

To me, nor have I been unchaste." "And yet it so will be:
Your Lord in Heaven truly said, It easy is for Me.
And it will be from Us a revelation to mankind;

An ever-present deed of mercy you therein shall find.
Be therefore wise, compliant, for it is a thing ordained."
And Mary bowed before the grace the angel had explained.

35.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 19 "MARY"

29. *Then she pointed to him. They said: How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy?*
30. *He spake: Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet,*
31. *And hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and alms-giving so long as I remain alive,*
32. *And (hath made me) dutiful toward her who bore me, and hath not made me arrogant, unblest.*
33. *Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!*
34. *Such was Jesus, son of Mary: (this is) a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt.*

They said: How can we talk to him, a boy in cradle laid?
He spake: 'I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me
The scripture and appointed me a Prophet, and hath made
Me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined
Upon me pray'r and giving alms, so long as I shall live,
And made me dutiful to her who bore me, neither hath
He made me arrogant, unblest. Peace on me the day
That I was born, the day I die, the day I shall be raised
Alive!' (For such was Jesus, son of Mary; doubt ye not.)

The prayer and the meditative calm of thoughtful mind
Combining in a worship service elevate the heart.
The duty owed by children to their parents and the joy
In paying of the poor-due by our labor daily earned
Convey, as work, another meaning of our "service"-word.
For work and worship, labor-adoration, come to One.
And this the Jesus we have heard has taught and well
declared.

36.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 19 "MARY"

*97. And We make (this Scripture) easy in thy tongue, (O
Muhammad) only that thou mayst bear good tidings
therewith unto those who ward off (evil), and warn therewith
the froward folk.*

The King, in clarity arrayed,
For us and for the Prophet made
The scripture easy on the tongue
As, in the early world, among

The Sons of Heaven, nothing stayed
The recitation; arms upflung,
They psalmed in awe, forever young,
Acclaiming, solemn, unafraid.

Ev'n while the sun through heaven raced,
"Muhammad," said the One, "thou mayst
Good tidings bear to those who ward

Off evil, and therewith wilt warn
The froward on our festal morn."
They heard the Word and hymned the Lord.

37.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 20 "ṬĀ HĀ" AND SURA 94 "SOLACE"

20:25. (Moses) said: O my Lord!

Expand me my breast;

26. Ease my task for me;

27. And remove the impediment

From my speech,

28. So that they may understand

What I say. . . [tr. A. Yusuf Ali]

94:1. Have We not caused thy bosom to dilate,

2. And eased thee of the burden

3. Which weighed down thy back;

4. And exalted thy fame?

The spirit-life within is greater made
When heart and breast are widened by the air,
The burdened speaker better to prepare
Who may a heightened harmony unlade:

So Moses and Muhammad, unafraid
And ready, by the heavens' favor fair,
The glory of their Maker to declare,
He strengthens with an energy unstayed.

The task of each He lightens and with ease
Removing every hesitation He
Will make them capable of clarities.

Impediment He takes away to free
The breath from care that would occasion seize:
The labor over, birth may come to be.

38.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 21 "THE PROPHETS"

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

- 1. Their reckoning draweth nigh for mankind, while they turn away in heedlessness.*
- 2. Never cometh there unto them a new reminder from their Lord but they listen to it while they play,*
- 3. With hearts preoccupied. And they confer in secret. The wrong-doers say: Is this other than a mortal like you? will ye then succumb to magic when ye see (it)?*
- 4. He saith: My Lord knoweth what is spoken in the heaven and the earth. He is the Hearer, the Knower.*
- 5. Nay, say they, (these are but) muddled dreams; nay, he hath but invented it; nay, he is but a poet. Let him bring us a portent even as those of old (who were God's messengers) were sent (with portents).*

The danger-portal, openly portentous,
May be than poet-moment less momentous.
What with a guess the magian will divines
May prove in truth more wise than wilder signs.

The wizard, even, with a seeming spell
May help forestall the fall he would foretell.
To dreaming hand a salve may be revealed
To save from early grave a heart unhealed.

What wizard, magian poet, dreamer share
With prophecy is that they will declare
Before a portent comes that may too late
A warning offer, how to reinstate

An Eden-peace that we've been loth to lose.
The source I don't ignore, but would refuse
Reminders of creation to dismiss:
We need our dreamers at a time like this.

39.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 21 "THE PROPHETS"

37. *Man is made of haste. I shall show you My portents, but
ask Me not to hasten.*

Man is made of haste.

No time did Adam have to waste:
He named the animals; and angels, too,
Were soon surprised to hear from him their names anew.

Man is made of haste.

Impatient Moses, for a taste
Of milk and honey from the Promised Land,
For water struck the rock in spite of God's command.

Man is made of haste.

The stubborn Israelites who faced
Their forty days of waiting with disdain
A calf would fashion—Pride, inglorious and vain!

.....

Is it bad to haste?

We good and evil here have traced:
'Tis better to be *slow* to anger, lest
A hurried word defame and shame the holy, blest.

Patience blent with haste,
Required by men who've wisely raced
To find forgiving mercy from their Lord,
Will gain reward and welcome with a kind accord.

Aid-of-angel-graced,
With zeal, reluctance interlaced,
The Prophet, pressed to read a text although
He couldn't read, performed the deed, as well we know.

40.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 23 "THE BELIEVERS"

114. He will say: Ye tarried but a little if ye only knew.

The gift is rare of these my latter days—
Though recent, deeds but barely done will fade
From memory, more daily faint the rays.

When, bright and strange, the lines that I have made
Arising pierce, in after-rain, the haze
Awaiting them that but impatient stayed,

A childlike novelty of wild amaze
In re-created primacy arrayed
That with a widened eye the mind can raise

From deadness which is but forgetting, strayed
And now refund, a something in me sways:
A secret. Though unknowing, I had prayed.

.....

So time restored its power of surprise,
The moment lengthened, when the one before
Gave way and vanished, that to untried eyes

And brain uncluttered by the waste of yore
My energy be able to arise
Allaying encrustation. Torrents pour

Enliveningly into dry. Surmise
A welcome granting, what may lie in store
Is irrigated and, unwearied, tries,

More eager, the horizon to explore
Whereto the new-awakened biped flies:
An eagle is a higher dinosaur.

41.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 25 "THE CRITERION"

7. *And they say: What aileth this messenger (of Allah) that he eateth food and walketh in the markets? Why is not an angel sent down unto him, to be a warner with him?*
8. *Or (why is not) a treasure thrown down unto him, or why hath he not a paradise from whence to eat? And the evil-doers say: Ye are but following a man bewitched.*
9. *See how they coin similitudes for thee, so that they are all astray and cannot find a road!*
10. *Blessed is He Who, if He will, will assign thee better than (all) that—Gardens underneath which rivers flow—and will assign thee mansions.*

A tree of life is he who blessed fruit will bear.
Muhammad was himself bewildered made at first:
A force had ordered him to read, and had immersed
His earthly will in that of Heaven, everywhere

Effective in the depth of soul it might reveal.
It was no sinful jinn that held him, but the fair
Contestant Angel. Wisdom-scripture would declare
That, as with Jacob, He may lame, but later heal.

By work of spirit judged in Allah-Mind are we,
Not by appearances of treasure, paradise,
Or any bright-bedizened, witching, ill advice.

The mansions of the Lofty Hall in mind await;
And flowing garden-rivers, with their love elate,
Within the soul will flow by spirit-will made free.

42.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 25 "THE CRITERION"

45. *Hast thou not seen how thy Lord hath spread the shade—
And if He Willed He could have made it still—then We have
made the sun its pilot;*
46. *Then We withdraw it unto Us, a gradual withdrawal?*
47. *And He it is Who maketh night a covering for you, and
sleep repose, and maketh day a resurrection.*
48. *And He it is Who sendeth the winds, glad tidings heralding
His mercy, and We send down purifying water from the sky,*
49. *That We may give life thereby to a dead land, and We give
many beasts and men that We have created to drink thereof.*

The spreading of the shadow long upon the lawn
When slowly guided by the rising of the sun,
The pilot of the changing of the shade, who won
The height and then subsided, heaven-light withdrawn—

We think of this, and then recall the robe of night
Wherein we all, enwraught in tranquil thankfulness,
Repose in preparation: day will come to bless
With dawn our resurrection swathed in morning light.

We know that it is He Who, by a vivid wind
With mind-transforming soil- and forest-warming twinned
And fortified by water falling from the sky,

Arousing woken field and mead, will glad the eye
In earth new-clad in flowers and, to utter words
He taught King Solomon, inspire the breath of birds.

43.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 25 "THE CRITERION"

72. *And those who will not witness vanity, but when they pass
near senseless play, pass by with dignity.*
73. *And those who, when they are reminded of the revelations
of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat,*
74. *And who say: Our Lord! Vouchsafe us comfort of our wives
and of our offspring, and make us patterns for (all) those
who ward off (evil).*
75. *They will be awarded the high place forasmuch as they
were steadfast, and they will meet therein with welcome and
the word of peace,*
76. *Abiding there for ever. Happy is it as abode and station!*

And those who will not witness vanity, but when they pass
Near senseless play, pass by with dignity, and those who, when
They are reminded of the revelations of their Lord,

Will fall not deaf and blind thereat, but rather say:
Vouchsafe

Us comfort of our wives and of our offspring: patterns
make

Of us for those who ward off evil—they will He award

The high place forasmuch as they were steadfast: they will
meet

Therein with blessing and with welcome and the word of
peace,

Abiding there for ever. Happy station, glad accord!

What kind of people are the righteous whom the sayings
laud,

Enskying them as heightened-hearted with an ardent tone
Of dignity, nobility, to which we harken awed?

To gaze upon the One above them able have they grown,
Who vanity pass by and, thankful for the daily bread
To men and to their wives and children granted, all have
shown

A greater gratitude, and for a better present, led
To comprehend in daily breath what blessed Being lives:
Who savors deeper breathing in a bliss forgets, forgives.

44.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 26 "THE POETS"

29. (Pharaoh) said: If thou choosest a god other than me, I assuredly shall place thee among the prisoners.
30. [Moses] said: Even though I show thee something plain?
31. (Pharaoh) said: Produce it then, if thou art of the truthful!
32. Then he flung down his staff and it became a serpent manifest.
33. And he drew forth his hand and lo! it was white to the beholders.
34. (Pharaoh) said unto the chiefs about him: Lo, this is verily a knowing wizard,
35. Who would drive you out of your land by his magic. Now what counsel ye?
36. They said: Put him off, (him) and his brother, and send into the cities summoners
37. Who shall bring unto thee every knowing wizard.
38. So the wizards were gathered together at a set time on a day appointed.
39. And it was said unto the people: Are ye (also) gathering?
40. (They said): Aye, so that we may follow the wizards if they are the winners. [...]
43. Moses said unto [the wizards]: Throw what ye are going to throw!
44. Then they threw down their cords and the staves and said: By Pharaoh's might, lo! we verily are the winners.
45. Then Moses threw his staff and lo! it swallowed that which they did falsely show.
46. And the wizards were flung prostrate,
47. Crying, We believe in the Lord of the Worlds,
48. The Lord of Moses and Aaron.
49. (Pharaoh) said: Ye put your faith in him before I give you leave....

The Wonder of the Paling Hand the stunned beholder
Might well have warned: stiff competition was impending
For every wizard that, his skill to Pharaoh lending,
Would learn the Lord would make the gloried Moses
bolder.

"We'll follow all the wizards who will prove the winners!"
But, awed, the people watched the Moses-serpent swallow
The mages' failing snakes. 'Twas he whom they would
follow,
Refusing homage to the losers, mere beginners.

The Pharaoh was unwilling any blame to shoulder;
He felt his power wane; the would-be-victor sinners
Had quailed before the greater sage: his blood ran colder.

His pride was mortified; magicians' hope would molder:
Was Horus mortal? What of Ra, the pre-Apollo?
Turn not away from God, nor worship what is hollow!

45.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 27 "THE ANT"

20. *And he sought among the birds and said: How is it that I see not the hoopoe, or is he among the absent?*
21. *I verily will punish him with hard punishment or I verily will slay him, or he verily shall bring me a plain excuse.*
22. *But he was not long in coming, and he said: I have found out (a thing) that thou apprehendest not, and I come unto thee from Sheba with sure tidings.*
23. *Lo! I found a woman ruling over them, and she hath been given (abundance) of all things, and hers is a mighty throne.*
24. *I found her and her people, worshipping the sun instead of Allah. . . .*
27. *(Solomon) said: We shall see whether thou speakest truth or whether thou art of the liars.*
28. *Go with this my letter and throw it down unto them; then turn away and see what (answer) they return.*
29. *(The Queen of Sheba) said (when she received the letter): O chieftains! Lo! there hath been thrown unto me a noble letter.*
30. *Lo! it is from Solomon, and lo! it is: In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful. . . .*

The hoopoe bird, whose beak and crown
Might seem to form a single spear,
To Solomon brought kingly cheer:
When Hoopoe threw the letter down

Before the court of Sheba's queen,
It led the lady to prepare
To visit him—their love affair
Among the sweetest ever seen.

84 Martin Bidney

Monogamous, for but one season,
The bird has offered every reason
For good and dubious repute,

Malodorous when guarding young,
Decried as thief, then psalmed and sung
For beauty, as the mood will suit.

46.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 28 "THE STORY"

14. *And when [Moses] reached his full strength and was ripe,
We gave him wisdom and knowledge. Thus do We reward
the good.*
15. *And he entered the city at a time of carelessness of its folk,
and he found therein two men fighting, one of his own caste
[i.e., religion], and the other of his enemies; and he who was
of his caste asked him for help against him who was of his
enemies. So Moses struck him with his fist and killed him.
He said: This is of the devil's doing. Lo! he is an enemy, a
mere misleader.*
16. *He said: My Lord! Lo! I have wronged my soul, so forgive
me. Then He forgave him. Lo! He is the forgiving, the
Merciful.*
17. *He said: My Lord! Forasmuch as Thou hast favored me, I
will nevermore be a supporter of the guilty.*

The future leader of the Jews
Were wiser, did he dare refuse
To fight a man, when asked for aid,
With no investigation made.

But God his wrathful will forgave,
And Moses then, his soul to save,
Would offer up a solemn oath
To learn restraint and pardon, both.

The summoner again would call
However, in another brawl,
And Moses hastened once again

To aid him, but the foe, attacked,
Dissuaded Moses, who had lacked
Restraint among impulsive men ...

47.
**LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
 IN SURA 28 "THE STORY"**

44. *And thou (Muhammad) wast not on the western side (of the Mount) when We expounded unto Moses the commandment, and thou wast not among those present;*
45. *But We brought forth generations, and their lives dragged on for them. And thou wast not a dweller in Midian, reciting unto them Our revelations, but We kept sending (messengers to men).*
46. *And thou wast not beside the Mount when We did call; but (the knowledge of it is) a mercy from thy Lord that thou mayest warn a folk unto whom no warner came before thee, that haply they may give heed.*
47. *Otherwise, if disaster should afflict them because of that which their own hands have sent before (them), they might say: Our Lord! Why sentest thou no messenger unto us, that we might have followed Thy revelations and been of the believers?*
48. *But when there came unto them the Truth from Our presence, they said: Why is he not given the like of what was given unto Moses? Did they not disbelieve in that which was given unto Moses of old? They say: Two magics that support each other; and they say: Lo! in both we are disbelievers.*

Who have no mind for words of prophecy
 From Moses and Muhammad turn away:
 "Two magics of a kind," they, stubborn, say.
 "Let there be light? It still is night, for me."

O Prophet, by the mount you couldn't be
 On that great, plenteous, momentous day
 When Moses bold—behold!—with twofold ray
 Proclaimed the Law that set the people free.

And you were not in Midian, where We
Had let the people feel Our presence. They
Would often cast our messages away
And let their lives drag on in apathy.

Yet Allah said: Muhammad, unto Me
You came, by angel aided. So they may
Whom by My grace no doubters dare affray:
You turned in time and found eternity.

48.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 28 "THE STORY"

76. *Now Korah was of Moses' folk, but he oppressed them; and
We gave him so much treasure that the stores thereof would
verily have been a burden for a troop of mighty men. When
his own folk said unto him: Exult not: lo! Allah loveth not
the exultant;*

77. *But . . . neglect not thy portion of the world, and be thou
kind even as Allah hath been kind to thee, and seek not
corruption in the earth; lo! Allah loveth not corrupters,*

78. *He said: I have been given it only on account of knowledge I
possess. . . .*

79. *Then went he forth before the people in his pomp. Those
who were desirous of the life of the world said: Ah, would
that unto us had been given the like of what hath been given
unto Korah! Lo! he is lord of rare good fortune.*

80. *But those who had been given knowledge said: Woe unto
you! The reward of Allah for him who believeth and doeth
right is better, and only the steadfast will obtain it.*

82. *And morning found those who had coveted his place but
yesterday crying: Ah, welladay! Allah enlargeth the
provision for him whom He will . . . and straiteneth it (for
whom He will).*

*Compel the poor to live upon a Crust of bread by soft mild arts
Smile when they frown frown when they smile & when a man
looks pale*

With labor & abstinence say he looks healthy & happy. . . .

*With pomp give every crust of bread you give with gracious
cunning*

*Magnify small gifts reduce the man to want a gift & then give
with pomp. . . .*

—William Blake, *The Four Zoas* 80:9-16

When Korah to the folk in pomp proceeded forth
In pride, with knowledge he applied but to oppress,
From trumpet-mouth resounded loud self-righteousness,
Recalling Demon-Reason in the frozen north,

The tempter in the epic verse by William Blake.
The poorest are the wealthy who their gold misuse;
When humble suppliants entreat, they bold refuse
The love and mercy due—a fatal, grave mistake.

So let us not forget that God the Prophet sent
To be a mercy to the worlds, an element
Of calming and of balm, like dawn-illumined dew,

Refreshing; then, the remnant rising to the view
Of One who, an embrace extending wide in rays
Of warming, welcoming, will merit heightened praise.

49.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 29 "THE SPIDER"

48. *And thou (O Muhammad) wast not a reader of any scripture before it, nor didst thou write it with thy right hand, for then might those have doubted, who follow falsehood.*
49. *But it is clear revelations in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge. . . .*
50. *And they say: Why are not portents sent down upon him from his Lord? Say: Portents are with Allah only, and I am but a plain warner.*
51. *It is not enough for them that We have sent down unto thee the Scripture which is read unto them? Lo! herein verily is mercy, and a reminder for folk who believe.*

An emblem set for emulating now
Is what within the Prophet's heart uprose
Upon the call of Gabriel: a sign
Of mercy, a reminder, and a fount.

Unwritten by the human hand (for how
Describe it?) is the feeling lent to those
Who from a source within that is divine
Will wake, as in the cave upon the mount.

To gaze into the human heart and say
What from the origin of life will rise
Will mean to hear, as on Creation morn,
A call as of a trumpet in the mind.

The darkness that, transpierced with primal ray,
Was womb to word implanted by the skies
A depth will add to utterance new-born
Whereby the child the father will re-find.

50.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 30 "THE ROMANS"

20. *And of His signs is this: He created you of dust, and behold you human beings, ranging widely!*
21. *And of His signs is this: He created for you helpmeets from yourselves that ye might find rest in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are portents for folk who reflect.*
22. *And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors. Lo! herein indeed are portents for men of knowledge.*
23. *And of His signs is your slumber by night and by day, and your seeking of His bounty. Lo! herein indeed are portents for folk who heed.*
24. *And of His signs is this: He showeth you the lightning for a fear and for a hope, and sendeth down water from the sky, and thereby quickeneth the earth after her death. Lo! herein indeed are portents for a folk who understand.*
25. *And of His signs is this: The heavens and the earth stand fast by His command, and afterward, when He calleth you, lo! from the earth ye will emerge.*

*And let us number this among His signs:
To rise above our dust our fate defines.
A man and wife each other must revere:
For those who will reflect see omens here.*

*And let us number this among His signs:
His order heavens and the earth aligns.
Our varied languages to us are dear:
For those who will reflect see omens here.*

*And let us number this among His signs:
Our skins in different colors He designs.*

A rainbow-maker He, 'mid whirling sphere:
For those who will reflect see omens here.

And let us number this among His signs:
Bright earth-reviving rains in driving lines!
He shows you lightning for a hope and fear:
For those who will reflect see omens here.

And let us number this among His signs:
His overseeing never undermines.
The soul, if chided, will arise in cheer:
For those who will reflect see omens here.

51.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 32 "THE PROSTRATION"

15. *Only those believe in Our revelations who, when they are reminded of them, fall down prostrate and hymn the praise of their Lord, and they are not scornful,*
16. *Who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of that We have bestowed on them.*
17. *No soul knoweth what is kept hid for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do.*

They follow holy revelation who
Fall prostrate, hymning praise, and know not scorn
But rise from bed and long before the morn
Recite more lauding, Allah's proper due,

As did the Prophet, well attending to
The blessing of the Night that will enshroud
The soul for holy contemplation bowed
In silent strength. For what they used to do

Our spirits are rewarded, but in ways
That often will transcend the bounds of praise,
For they are hidden, and we cannot know

What joy, a seed of light, Allāh may sow
That for the righteous to a palm will grow
And calm protection spread, and length of days.

52.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 33 "THE CLANS"

35. *Lo! men who surrender unto Allah, and women who
surrender, and men who believe and women who believe,
and men who obey and women who obey, and men who
speak the truth and women who speak the truth, and men
who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere,
and men who are humble and women who are humble, and
men who give alms and women who give alms, and men
who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their
modesty and women who guard (their modesty), and men
who remember Allah much and women who remember—
Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward.*

*Allàh prepares for them forgiveness and a vast reward,
Nor is it written ever with more splendid emphasis
That men and women equally have earned an equal bliss
Who follow equally the sweet commandments of their Lord.*

*Allàh prepares for them forgiveness and a vast reward:
Surrenderers, obeyers, and believers, they who speak
The truth and alms will give to aid the destitute and weak—
Their God in love to these above a welcome will accord.*

*Allàh prepares for them forgiveness and a vast reward:
The ones who persevere and who are humble and who fast,
Who modesty will guard, Allàh recalling first and last,
Will, guided to the Garden, be with hearty life restored.*

*Allàh prepares for them forgiveness and a vast reward.
The men and women reverent, devoted to the good,
The holy underlying Soul have wholly understood:
For these the clearest Eden-wine, by youths and houris
poured.*

53.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 33 "THE CLANS"

69. *O ye who believe! Be not as those who slandered Moses, but
Allah proved his innocence of that which they alleged, and
he was well esteemed in Allah's sight.*

"Ye who believe!

Be not as those who slandered Moses
But Allah proved his innocence of that which they alleged,
And he was well esteemed in Allah's sight."

Deep love will shrieve!
The drought of doubt a problem poses:
Your shallow river of desire yields naught for you when
dredged:
Give Praise, the mercy-dew that falls by night!

Why make them grieve
To whom the Lord a light discloses
When they in livened skylark-flight ascend to heav'n new-
fledged,
Because He led their wind-thrilled wings aright?

Sweet hymn to weave!
The nightingale, when chanting to the roses,
Himself had been enchanted, charmed, dart sharpened and
well-edged,
Yet death is vanquished by the lover's might.

54.
LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 34 "SABA"

34. *And We sent not unto any township a warner, but its pampered ones declared: Lo! we are disbelievers in that which ye bring unto us.*
35. *And they said: We are more (than you) in wealth and children. We are not the punished!*
36. *Say (O Muhammad): Lo! my lord enlargeth the provision for whom He will and narroweth it (for whom he will). But most of mankind know not.*
37. *And it is not your wealth nor your children that will bring you near unto Us, but he who believeth and doeth good (he draweth near). As for such, theirs will be twofold reward for that they did, and they will dwell secure in lofty halls.*

The pampered ones—by children, wealth, in pride
Exalted—do not truly dwell secure
But, fortified all too well, their minds immune.
Their power—Babel Tower—is defied

When they who live within to aims impure
Devote the mind and, armies at their side,
Discover what the loveless are denied,
However buttressed round by gold-allure.

For safe will no one live in lofty halls
Save him on whom the Godly favor falls
In wise requital for an impulse kind.

Believe in the ideals that motivate
Good deeds, nor idolize a high estate,
For idle is the might in pride confined.

55.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 35 "THE ANGELS"

*11. . . . And no one groweth old who groweth old, nor is aught
lessened of his life, but it is recorded in a Book. Lo! that is
easy for Allah.*

And no one groweth old who groweth old,
Nor aught is lessened of his life, except
 It be recorded in a Book;
 For Allah, easy, this.

By that, am I not frightened? Rather, bold!
I would not ev'n despair that what, inept
 And ill-advised, too swift, I took
 To be the road to bliss

In foolish youth is truly shown and told
And inerasable. I yet have leapt
 With joy that I, a boy, forsook
 What, mad, I did amiss.

Our memory I find a gift of gold:
Within the helpful record that is kept
 I'll hope to see, if I may look,
 Not sin, but synthesis.

56.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 35 "THE ANGELS"

11. *Allah created you from dust, then from a little fluid, then He made you pairs (the male and female). . . .*
12. *And the two seas are not alike: this, fresh sweet, good to drink, this (other) bitter, salt. And from them both ye eat fresh meat and derive the ornament that ye wear. And thou seest the ship cleaving them with its prow that ye may seek of His bounty, and that haply ye may give thanks.*
13. *He maketh the night to pass into the day and He maketh the day to pass into the night. He hath subdued the sun and moon to service. Each runneth unto an appointed term. Such is Allah, your Lord; His is the Sovereignty; and those unto whom ye pray instead of Him own not so much as the white spot on a date-stone.*
27. *Hast thou not seen that Allah causeth water to fall from the sky, and We produce therewith fruit of divers hues; and among the hills are streaks white and red, of divers hues, and (others) raven black;*
28. *And of men and beasts and cattle, in like manner, divers hues? The erudite among His bondmen fear Allah alone. Lo! Allah is Mighty, Forgiving.*
29. *Lo! those who read the Scripture of Allah, and establish worship, and spend of that which We have bestowed on them secretly and openly, they look forward to imperishable gain.*

With pairs—the dust and fluid, male and female, seas
The fresh, the salt, and day and night, and sun and moon—
The interaction of the two a doubled boon
Will mean, and next we pass to multiplicities—

The white and red and raven black of hill and glen,
The many hues of fruits and animals and men;
The coral, pearl, carnelian, agate that we ken
As coming from the sea, or riverbed—and when

We grant, in thanks to One, our many charities,
From brothers hidden for their dignity, and known
To Him the Giver—yes!—to Allah's eye alone,

We cast our bread on waters, with an eager ease:
May He that fresh and salt will blend in cloud and air
To separate in creek and ocean see it there.

57.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 36 "YÂ SÎN"

33. *A token unto them is the dead earth. We revive it, and
We bring forth from it grain so that they eat thereof;*
34. *And we have [...] caused springs of water to gush forth [...]*
35. *Glory be to Him Who created all the sexual pairs, of that
which the earth groweth, and of themselves, and of that
which they know not!*
37. *And the sun runneth on unto a resting-place for him. . . .*
38. *And for the moon We have appointed mansions till she
return like an old shriveled palm-leaf.*
39. *It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor doth the
night outstrip the day. They float each in an orbit.*
40. *And a token unto them is that We bear their offspring in
the laden ship,*
41. *And have created for them of the like thereof whereon they
ride.*
79. *[Behold Him] Who hath appointed for you fire from the
green tree, and behold! ye kindle from it.*

The grain arising; every spring of water gushing down;
The creatures growing on the earth by sexual desire;
The sun a-running to the resting place which he'll require;
The moon that travels through her mansions till with
crescent crown

As palm-leaf shapen that when withered, shriveling, will curl,
She will return; the sun and moon that in their orbits float;
The lucky offspring saved of old within the Noah-boat;
The ship and raft, the water-craft today that sails unfurl;

The movement up and down and in and out and near and far
He made Who has appointed striking fire from streaming
tree

To mirror in the darkness of the eye, as gleam at sea,

The brightness and the void unknowable from which it came:
That intertwining echoing, the Adam who could name
The angels would contain the mire and flame and farther star.

58.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 38 "ŞAD"

22. *And hath the story of the litigants come unto thee? How they climbed the wall into the royal chamber;*
23. *How they burst in upon David, and he was afraid of them. They said: Be not afraid! (We are) two litigants, one of whom hath wronged the other; therefore judge aright between us; be not unjust; and show us the fair way.*
24. *Lo! this my brother hath ninety and nine ewes while I had one ewe; and he said: Entrust it to me, and he conquered me in speech.*
25. *(David said): He hath wronged thee in demanding thine ewe in addition to his ewes, and lo! many partners oppress one another, save such as believe and do good works, and they are few. And David guessed that We had tried him, and he sought forgiveness of his Lord, and he bowed himself and fell down prostrate and repented.*
26. *So We forgave him that; and lo! he had access to Our presence and a happy journey's end.*

Why, for the access to the presence of
The High, to have a happy journey's end,
Was David first required, a penitent,
To bow and seek a pardon from the Lord?

He had an intimation from above
The judgment he had offered couldn't send
Redeeming light, for it was haughty, meant
To show a fiction: deeds did not accord.

He deeply knew that he had failed in love
And couldn't be what he pretended: friend
To one who, needing comfort, had been sent
To test him. What he'd done, he now abhorred.

A spirit visitant, a hidden dove,
To lucky ones in time the Lord will lend:
When, quickly reawakened, we repent,
How gratefully to grace are we restored!

59.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 38 "ŞAD"

31. *And We bestowed on David, Solomon. [...] Lo! he was ever turning in repentance (toward Allah).*
32. *When there were shown to him at eventide light-footed coursers*
33. *[...] he said: Lo! I have preferred the good things (of the world) to the remembrance of my Lord; till they were taken out of sight behind the curtain.*
35. *And verily We tried Solomon, and set upon his throne a (mere) body. Then did he repent.*
36. *He said: My Lord! Forgive me and bestow on me sovereignty such as shall not belong to any after me. Lo! Thou art the Bestower.*
37. *So We made the wind subservient unto him, setting fair by his command whithersoever he intended.*

The light-footed coursers would Solomon not
Prefer to the Lord Who afforded him grace:
The horse that is winning the physical race
Were less of a symbol of soul than was thought.

Material body is dead on a throne
Until the repentant indebtedness own:
The sovereign ruler is put in his place
By boon of the One with the radiant face.

When Solomon, seeing the dawnlight arise,
Ascends by a mental Buraq to the skies,
The sovereign God Who will pardon the wise

The king will forgive who had learned he had sinned,
Awarding him strength in directing the wind
While riding it whithersoever it flies.

60.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 38 "ŞAD"

42. *And make mention (O Muhammad) of Our bondman Job,
when he cried unto his Lord (saying): Lo! the devil doth
afflict me with distress and torment.*
43. *(And it was said unto him): Strike the ground with thy foot.
This (spring) is a cool bath and a refreshing drink.*
44. *And we bestowed on him (again) his household and
therewith the like thereof, a mercy from Us, and a memorial
for men of understanding.*
45. *[. . .] Lo! he was ever turning in repentance (to his Lord).*
46. *And make mention of our bondmen, Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob, men of parts and vision.*
47. *Lo! We purified them with a pure thought, remembrance of
the Home (of the Hereafter).*
48. *Lo! in Our sight they are verily of the elect, the excellent.*
49. *And make mention of Ishmael and Elisha and Dhû'l Kifl.
All are of the chosen.*
50. *This is a reminder. And lo! for those who ward off (evil) is a
happy journey's end,*
51. *Garden of Eden, whereof the gates are opened for them,*
52. *Wherein, reclining, they call for plenteous fruit and cool
drink (that is) therein.*
53. *And with them are those of modest gaze, companions.*
54. *This is that ye are promised for the Day of Reckoning.*

Be strengthened by reminder, fortified by thought
Of those who earned the high reward of what they
wrought:

The bondman Job for whom, as later to the praised
And holy mother, God a wonder-spring upraised;

The patriarchal three who, noble men of parts,
Were purified in thought of Home by godly arts;

Dhû'l Kifl, Elisha, also Ishmael recall
Who prophesied His light and so were chosen all.

For those who ward off ill, a happy journey's end:
An Eden garden, where the opened gates will lend
A bliss to them that seek, of modest gaze, a friend.

Behold a promise for the Day of Reckoning:
To heroes of the spirit, awed, a psalm I sing,
Who earned, with perfect heart, a pardon from their King.

61.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
FROM SURA 38 "ŞAD"

72. *When thy Lord said unto the angels: lo! I am about to
create a mortal out of mire,*
73. *And when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of
My spirit, then fall down before him prostrate,*
74. *The angels fell down prostrate, every one,*
75. *Saving Iblis: he was scornful and became one of the
disbelievers.*
76. *He said: O Iblis! What hindereth thee from falling prostrate
before that which I have created with both My hands? Art
thou too proud or art thou of the high exalted?*
77. *He said: I am better than he. Thou createdst me of fire,
whilst him Thou didst create of clay.*
78. *He said: Go forth from hence, for lo! thou art outcast ...*

"I am about to make a mortal out of mire."
But Iblis, or Diábolos, the Slanderer,
Who called himself the high exalted, would demur:
"You fashioned him of clay, but me you formed of fire."

Adoring is a portal, surliness a pyre.
Acclaiming angels, with their lifted wings awhirr
That whispered mercy to the worlds, a harbinger
Of wakened harmony of heart, were rising higher:

Yet even these that heaven-zephyr may respire
Could see the breathings of the wakened Adam were
As of the Sun, a racing life. With him concur

Their interanimated hands upraised in choir;
And, riant made upon the height in bright attire,
They praising prostrate kneel 'mid wind instilled with
myrrh.

62.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 39 "THE TROOPS"

33. *And whoso bringeth the truth and believeth therein—Such
are the dutiful.*

34. *They shall have what they will of their Lord's bounty. That
is the reward of the good:*

35. *That Allah will remit from them the worst of what they
did, and will pay them for reward the best they used to do.*

That Allah will remit from them the worst of what they did,
Rewarding them, and fitly, for the best they used to do,
Will bring before the dutiful what's worth attending to:
With God-commended mercy breath repentant will be
thrid.

Regret with negative effect our ethics would forbid:
Behavior changed without delay will make a higher you;
A deed of love when swiftly done, like sunlight shining
through
The storm, a morbid mind of its morose remorse will rid.

The force that drives to higher life is but another sun
Emboldening when cold and rain their warning course
have run.

To everything a season: if the time of reason's here

The record is erased of the mistakes of yesteryear.
The penalty of error He's been willing to remit
For those who rose to know the noble road: remember it.

63.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 39 "THE TROOPS"

61. *And Allah delivereth those who ward off (evil) because of their deserts. Evil toucheth them not, nor do they grieve.*
73. *And those who keep their duty to their Lord are driven into the Garden in troops till, when they reach it, and the gates thereof are opened, and the warders thereof say unto them: Peace be unto you! Ye are good, so enter ye (the Garden of delight), to dwell therein;*
74. *They say: Praise be to Allah, Who hath fulfilled His promise unto us and hath made us inherit the land, sojourning in the Garden where we will! So bounteous is the wage of workers.*
75. *And thou (O Muhammad) seest the angels thronging round the Throne, hymning the praises of their Lord. And they are judged aright. And it is said: Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!*

The prodigal who wastefully would drive away the hours
Are not delivered till they ward off evil. To their hurt
They squander time, the granted wealth of mind, and their
desert

Will sadly be the famine of the waning of their pow'rs.

But those who keep their duty to their Lord are driven in
Deserving troops to fruitful Garden rest, and when the gate
Is opened and the warders offer welcome, celebrate
The Great I AM Who taught us how to be, beget, begin.

So bounteous the wage of workers who in living strived
By labor their environs to enliven and arrived
At length at this, the image of the beauty they had made!

No evils them assail; they do not grieve, nor need unlade
Their sorrows more in mourning. Rather, glad as seraphim,
They eastward turn repentantly, surrendering to Him.

64.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 40 "THE BELIEVER"

26. *And Pharaoh said: Suffer me to kill Moses, and let him cry unto his Lord [...]*

27. *Moses said: Lo! I seek refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every scorner [...]*

28. *And a believing man of Pharaoh's family, who hid his faith, said: Would ye kill a man because he saith: My Lord is Allah, and hath brought you clear proofs from your Lord? If he is lying, then his lie is upon him; and if he is truthful, then some of that wherewith he threateneth you will strike you. Lo! Allah guideth not one who is a prodigal, a liar.*

46. *And Pharaoh said: . . . Build for me a tower that haply I may reach the roads,*

47. *The roads of the heavens, and may look upon the God of Moses, though verily I think him a liar. Thus was the evil that he did made fair-seeming unto Pharaoh, and he was debarred from the (right) way. The plot of Pharaoh ended but in ruin.*

They little learn from history whose willful dream is vain.
The Tow'r of Babel showed what titans thought they might attain:

It ended but in ruin as the Pharaoh-tale we hear;
So pride will cloud the view. Be mindful; keep the heaven clear!

Not all the Pharaoh's followers were prodigal as he
In mad, expanding plans that grandly add to vanity,
Nor traveled they in fantasy upon the Eden roads
With overreaching castle-ladder gained by greedy goads.

The Pharaoh called the leader of the Israelites a liar.
This mighty king like Nimrod thought to sky he might
aspire:

Proportionate his fall to that importunate desire!

The crowding out of clarity by thrill of Iblis-pride
Had guaranteed the palace-top would never be enskied:
By Pharaoh undiscovered, thus the evil would abide.

65.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 41 "FUṢĪLAT"

34. *The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! he, between whom and thee there is enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend.*

If, anger-blinded, you reply to enmity
By swift return, ferocious, eager, of the blow,
You've no more vigor in your vision than the foe:
Hostility-instilling, both, are you and he.

You, imitating him, have copied what you saw,
Reacting to an action, as by Newton's law
That guides an eyeless thing opaque to spirit-light,
Propelled by mere momentum's dull, unmindful might.

Repetitive and painful, tiresome, traded ire
Intensive labor will unendingly require:
An evil deed demands one better, not the same!

Your God is Origin: would you, with kindly flame
Of warming friendship in your eye, a hand extend,
Your foe will then become as though a bosom friend.

66.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 41 "FUṢILAT"

*51. When we show favor unto man, he withdraweth and
turneth aside, but when ill toucheth him then he aboundeth
in prayer.*

Resembling predators, preoccupied
With menace, peril!—thus do we respond
In fear to ill, not thinking what beyond
A present threat the ready mind should guide.

Let rather man pour forth and sing, beside,
A hymn, a dithyramb of gratitude,
And add his thanks for being so endued
With that ability to thank!—supplied

To them alone that memory will bond
To blessing God extended, not denied:
Our every breath will mindfulness include

Among the gifts unmerited! Though fond
Of favor, letting laziness delude
Unwisely we reply in thoughtless pride.

67.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 42 "COUNSEL"

40. *The guerdon of an ill-deed is an ill the like thereof. But
whosoever pardoneth and amendeth, his wage is the affair of
Allah. [...]*

43. *And verily who so is patient and forgiveth—lo! that, verily,
is (of) the steadfast heart of things.*

A recompense awarded is by law,
And yet a higher principle obtains:
Vice, virtue are their own reward. Who gains
The ill that he intended has the flaw

Inherent in the deed for payment: pains
That wrath and rancor caused but not foresaw.
Yet one who pardons and amends in awe
Of Allah will be graced by mercy-rains.

The seekers of reward a lower rung
Upon the moral ladder reach than tongue
Of Prophet would commend, who always taught

To love one's neighbor is a braver thought.
Without the love of Allah for the race
Of Adam there would be no human face.

68.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN
SURA 43 "ORNAMENTS OF GOLD"

21. *Or have We given them any Scripture before (this Qur'ân)
so that they are holding fast thereto?*
22. *Nay, for they say only: Lo! we found our fathers following a
religion, and we are guided by their footprints.*
23. *Even so we sent not a warner before thee (Muhammad) into
any township but its luxurious ones said: Lo! we found our
fathers following a religion, and we are following their
footprints.*

The caterpillar named the "pine processionary"
Is nearly blind and so, for safety in the dark,
It needs the leader, taught by instinct but to hark
To silken-ribbon thread ahead, of danger wary.

Experimenter Fabre one procession led
To climb a rounded vase. Along the upper border
He cut the thread, and thus in perfect circle-order
They walked, each blindly following the one ahead.

For more than eighty hours they marched, for seven days;
Five hundred yards in all; some three, four hundred turns.
As footprint follower the thinker little learns.

We may divert our path from what has gone before:
Disliking idols, Abraham had closed the door
And gladly left his father's wayward works and ways.

69.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN SURA 46
"THE WIND-CURVED SANDHILLS"

15. *And We have commended unto man kindness toward parents. His mother beareth him with reluctance, and bringeth him forth with reluctance, and the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months, till, when he attaineth full strength and reacheth forty years, he saith: My Lord! Arouse me that I may give thanks for the favor wherewith Thou hast favored me and my parents, and that I may do right acceptable unto Thee. And be gracious unto me in the matter of my seed. Lo! I have turned unto thee repentant, and lo! I am of those who surrender (unto Thee).*
16. *Those are they from whom We accept the best of what they do, and overlook their evil deeds. (They are) among the owners of the Garden. This is the true promise which they were promised (in the world).*
17. *And whoso saith unto his parents: Fie upon you both! Do ye threaten me that I shall be brought forth (again) when generations before me have passed away? And they twain cry unto Allah for help (and say): Woe unto thee! Believe! Lo! the promise of Allah is true. But he saith: This is naught save fables of the men of old:*
18. *Such are those on whom the Word concerning nations of the Jinn and mankind which have passed away before them hath effect. Lo! they are the losers.*

'Tis fitting to command, and to commend—
We (re)commend it, and ever and again—
Your mother, father: honor them. Amen.
The tenderness, affection elders lend—

Forever let it be remembered when
You're tempted to forget them, for 'tis then
The jinn, the loser who allures, will tend
A ruinously haughty thought to send.

The heedless rebel, who instead will cry,
"I fear no idle fable, Father, fie!
And, Mother, I have other, better aims!"

Will find that Allah may reject the claims
Of ingrates who unfaithful dare deny
The parent-grace availing from on high.

70.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 47 "MUHAMMAD"

36. [. . .] *And if ye believe and ward off (evil), He will give you your wages, and will not ask of you your worldly wealth.*
37. *If He should ask it of you and importune you, ye would hoard it, and He would bring to light your (secret) hates.*
38. *Lo! ye are those who are called to spend in the way of Allah, yet among you there are some who hoard. And as for him who hoardeth, he hoardeth only from his soul. And Allah is the rich, and ye are the poor. . . .*

It matters greatly; mindful be.
The task materiality
Imposes will importune you:
Let mind reply with higher view.

Though hoarding wealth, you well may find
A greater fortune when the mind
Between the former and the latter
The soul hath chosen over matter.

The spirit is the only rich
Discerner of the power which
Can value lend to wealth in dower.

When comes the final judgment hour,
The dreaming of the seeming poor
May lead at length to Eden pure.

71.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE IN
SURA 49 "THE PRIVATE APARTMENTS"

12. O ye who believe! Shun much suspicion; for lo! Some suspicion is a crime. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Ye abhor that (so abhor the other)! And keep your duty (to Allah). Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful.

Ye who believe, shun much suspicion!
It often is a crime to spy,
A lawless and implicit lie,
A mean traduction of tradition:

Examination of your soul
May be your animating goal,
But how a quiet mind attain
When neighbors' prying brought on pain?

A cannibal ingesting flesh,
A parasite, a slanderer—
Their willfulnesses intermesh:

To backbite means to be a cur.
Recall instead what Allah meant
Who said: Be merciful, relent.

72.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN SURA 50
THE BENEFICENT, SURA 56 "THE EVENT"

- 50:10. *And the earth hath He appointed for (His) creatures,*
11. *Wherein are fruit and sheathed palm-trees,*
12. *Husked grain and scented herb [...]*
- 56:27. *And those on the right hand; what of those on the right hand?*
28. *Among thornless lote-trees*
29. *And clustered plantains,*
30. *And spreading shade,*
31. *And water gushing,*
32. *And fruit in plenty [...]*
35. *Lo! We have created for them a (new) creation. . . .*

What is the bliss of Eden? We by Him are taught:
The life of making brave similitudes well-wrought.
If grain and scented herb, the fruit, the palm-tree sheathed,
Be loved for sight and taste and fragrance, we'll have
breathed

A scent and view and flavor known in paradise
Where clustered plantains, lote-tree, spreading shade entice.
When soul is aided by the best we know on earth,
A metaphor will form in splendid heaven-birth.

For Allah recommends no turning from the world:
When minding floating cloud, sky ocean-sail unfurled,
Or drop of mercy-dew, a rainbow prism bright,

More keen than wizard, see the Afterlife in light!
More apt than madness of the jinn, magician-craft,
The eye will gleam, divining why Mevlana laughed.

73.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
FROM SURA 52 "THE MOUNT"

29. *Therefore warn (men, O Muhammad). By the grace of Allah
thou art neither soothsayer nor madman.*
30. *Or say they: (he is) a poet, (one) for whom we may expect
the accident of time?*
31. *Say (unto them): Expect (your fill)! Lo! I am with you
among the expectant.*

Need practicers of crafted rhyme
Await the accident of time?
Who never proudly claim to tell
What is to come, nor rant in fell
And jinnlike raving unrestrained
May rather just reward have gained.

Calamity can they expect
Who style themselves the wise elect,
For light will shine in lowly place
On them who wait for holy grace,
Nor think they mighty are, and great,
And destined for a high estate.

Expectant are we all of death
Who ever drew a human breath,
Nor him appalls the closing day
Who was created truth to say
Which can the soul a body give
That on the page in awe may live.

Expectancy is but the start
Of breathing for the spirit-art,
The giving and instilling will
That spicelike would the air fulfill,

From twice a minus make a plus:
Be merry, temerarious.

No melody—the world will see—
Can ever end for those like me
That Eden's holy river seek;
Rhyme, rhythm both mean flow, in Greek.
Who music of the word deny
May in the desert thirsting lie.

The song of him that lived within
The wild and shed the shroud of sin
Turned every thistle to a fruit.
Life, wisdom, by a single root
United bloom on Eden tree:
High-luminant let music be!

74.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 53 "THE STAR"

33. *Didst thou (O Muhammad) observe him who turned away,*
34. *And gave a little, then was grudging?*
35. *Hath he knowledge of the Unseen so that he seeth?*
36. *Or hath he not had news of what is in the books of Moses*
37. *And Abraham who paid his debt:*
38. *That no laden one shall bear another's load,*
39. *And that man hath only that for which he maketh effort,*
40. *And that his effort will be seen,*
41. *And afterward he will be repaid for it with fullest payment;*
42. *And that thy Lord, He is the goal;*
43. *And that He it is who maketh laugh, and maketh weep. . . .*

The one who gives but little, with a grudge,
The great Unseen will never come to know.
No laden one shall bear another's load;
Your aim through holy effort you attain.

Beheld will be your labor by the Judge:
They rise who were in former days brought low.
To God—your love, your goal—is effort owed;
A time will come to laugh, though after pain.

How much of good will Moses' Torah show!—
Of faithful Abraham who paid his debt,
Of patient Jacob, sire to anger slow,

Of Joseph, high above his brethren set,
Who would the shirt of prophecy bestow,
That might a thought-awakening beget.

75.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
IN SURA 59 "EXILE"

24. He is Allah, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

He is Allah the Creator and the Shaper out of naught
And the Fashioner, Possessor of the loveliest of Names;
And the Rider on the lightning-steed whose will the
 maelstrom tames,
Blessed bearer of His image, will to blazon them be taught.

Ninety-nine the names of God, Who by his Prophet has re-
bought,
With the mind-redemptive empathy that Iblis-evil shames,
All the straying race of Adam, for creation-strength
 reframes,
When recited with a heaven-mind, our God-empowered
 thought.

Ninety-nine the names Muhammad has, to emulate the Lord.
And the heavens and the earth, His glory mirroring, afford
Names innumerable, beautiful, wherein we see restored

The excitement of the nightingale, beholding in the rose
What King Solomon in Sheba saw, the awe that rightly grows
When the image of the love he lent an eye reflecting shows.

76.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
FROM SURA 65 "DIVORCE"

5. [. . .] *And whoso keepeth his duty to Allah, He will remit from him his evil deeds and magnify reward for him.*

7. *Let him who hath abundance spend of his abundance, and he whose provision is measured, let him spend of that which Allah hath given him. Allah asketh naught of any soul save that which He hath given it. Allah will vouchsafe, after hardship, ease.*

There is no need to mortify
The mind or heart, your Lord to please.
He grants you, after hardship, ease
And will not rightful store deny.

He naught will ask of any soul
Save that which He has given it:
Keep what you need, provision fit,
And help those near, a reasoned goal.

The One will evil deeds remit
For him who will attend to these
Demands; He ever will extol
The spirit wise that wealth on high

Will, given, open-handed spend
On loved one, relative, and friend.

77.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 66 "BANNING"

11. *And Allah citeth an example for those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh when she said: My Lord! Build for me a home with Thee in the Garden, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from evildoing folk;*
12. *And Mary, daughter of 'Imrân, whose body was chaste, therefore We breathed therein something of Our Spirit. And she put faith in the words of her Lord and His Scriptures, and was of the obedient.*

Like Mary did the Pharaoh's wife,
Whose name we never would have heard
Without the healing holy word
The Prophet spoke, to tyrants rife

With pride, who'd glad apply the knife
To sons of Hebrews that averred
A truth, in hero-spirit spurred
Defiant, wise and kindly life

With pearls of mercy recommend
(Amid the men who merely killed
And fear, opposing wisdom, willed),

A saving and embraving grace
To radiate, that may replace
A raving ire. Arise, my friend!

78.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES IN SURA 67
"THE SOVEREIGNTY" AND SURA 19 "MARY"

*67:22. Is he who goeth groping on his face more rightly guided,
or he who walketh upright on a beaten road?*

*19:43. [Said Abraham to Terah,] O my father! Lo! there hath
come unto me of knowledge that which came not unto thee.
So follow me, and I will lead thee on a right path.*

Is he who goeth groping on his face more rightly guided,
Or he who walketh upright on a beaten road?
The one in fear of evil, demon-ire-derided,
Or he with love as godly goad?

Be Abraham example, who, his parent gently guiding
(As Joseph later to his ailing father showed
The Shirt of Sight Regained, the higher gift providing
That lightened sorrow's leaden load),

Upon the rightful path would lead in Eden-guidance,
Repaying wayward wrath in tranquil grace he owed
To Allah who paternal stringency and stridence
Would soften with the light He sowed.

79.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE FROM
SURA 73 "THE ENSHROUDED ONE"

20. *Lo! thy Lord knoweth how thou keepest vigil sometimes nearly two-thirds of the night, or (sometimes) half or a third thereof, as do a party of those with thee. Allah measureth the night and the day. He knoweth that ye count it not, and turneth unto you in mercy. Recite, then of the Qur'ân that which is easy for you. He knoweth that there are sick folk among you, while others travel in the land in search of Allah's bounty. . . . So recite of it that which is easy (for you), and establish worship and pay the poor-due, and (so) lend unto Allah a goodly loan. Whatsoever good ye send before you for your souls, ye will surely find it with Allah, better and greater in the recompense. And seek forgiveness of Allah. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*

You stay awake for major portions of the night
Along with boon companions traveling with you:
Great weariness of limb and mind may well ensue,
And it is hard to gauge the prayer-times aright.

But Allah is Forgiving, Merciful: recite
When you are able, healthy; pay the poor their due,
And aid the sick; and let the needy, not a few,
Permitted be to seek for Allah's bounty bright.

Whatever good you send before you for your souls
You'll find is better, greater in the recompense.
A mercy to the worlds your journey be from hence,

For gold of spirit comes to them that set their goals
In emulation of the One Whose love, immense,
A never-ending heav'n, auroral light, unrolls.

80.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 80 "HE FROWNED"

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

- 1. He frowned and turned away*
- 2. Because the blind man came unto him.*
- 3. What could inform thee but that he might grow (in grace)*
- 4. Or take heed and so the reminder might avail him?*

- 8. But as for him who cometh unto thee with earnest purpose*
- 9. And hath fear,*
- 10. From him thou art distracted.*
- 11. Nay, but verily it is an Admonishment,*
- 12. So let whosoever will pay heed to it. . . .*

- 24. Let man consider his food:*
- 25. How We pour water in showers*
- 26. Then split the earth in clefts*
- 27. And cause the grain to grow therein*
- 28. And grapes and green fodder*
- 29. And olive-trees and palm-trees*
- 30. And garden-closes of thick foliage*
- 31. And fruits and grasses:*
- 32. Provision for you and your cattle [...]*

I love the Prophet more when I peruse
A plain account of him as living man
Who, overcome, recovers—and he can!
We see him here as, wrongly, he'll refuse

A plain desire for counsel, thereby lose
A chance to offer aid: unkind to ban
The entry of a suppliant, the plan
Of Allah so negating. And I muse:

Of high example of the One we must
Be mindful Who, remaking humble dust,
Let wealth arise within the clefted earth,

So palm and olive, cattle-fodder, fruit
Might flourish—grass and grapevine taking root.
Help God in fertile purpose: aid rebirth.

81.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES FROM
SURA 86 "THE MORNING STAR"

1. *By the heaven and the Morning Star!*
- 2.—*Ah, what will tell thee what the Morning Star is!*
- 3.—*The piercing Star!*
4. *No human soul but hath a guardian over it.*
5. *So let man consider from what he is created.*
6. *He is created from a gushing fluid*
7. *That issued from between the loins and ribs.*

We praise the One Who made what bore the sperm,
And laud the glory force like morning star
That lights, revives. We resurrected are
By blessed testament that shall affirm—

As guide—caduceus, thyrsis on a herm,
And *testes* to the Lord to testify,
As twofold sources of the life-law lie
Below. The ram that was a weakened worm

Will rise. "I am," exalted, awed, we see:
In godhead grounded, fountain-found is he
Through whom, by vim within, divinity

Will rise to cry the fluid answer to
What rain will send, expended from the blue.
We lift our hands in vital thanks to You!

82.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES FROM
SURA 88 "THE OVERWHELMING"

8. *In that day other faces will be calm,*
9. *Glad for their effort past,*
10. *In a high garden*
11. *Where they hear no idle speech,*
12. *Wherein is a gushing spring,*
13. *Wherein are couches raised*
14. *And goblets set at hand*
15. *And cushions ranged*
16. *And silken carpets spread.*

In *that* day, other faces will be calm,
Glad for their effort past,
In a high garden
Where they will hear no idle speech,
Where is a gushing spring,
Wherein are couches raised
And goblets set at hand
And cushions ranged
And silken carpet spread.

Then will it be a physic and a balm,
The tranquil soul at last
Attaining pardon;
A kind, a friendly hand to each,
A greeting from the King,
Whom we had ever praised
In East and Western land;
And none estranged—
The pious garlanded.

A hymn we hear, in rhythm, and a psalm,
For spirit-wealth amassed
No heart will harden;
The sage in wisdom glad will teach
Of every heav'nly thing
That had the brain amazed.
Before the Lord they stand,
Their love unchanged
Whom He to Eden led.

83.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 92 "THE NIGHT"

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

- 1. By the night enshrouding*
- 2. And the day resplendent*
- 3. And Him Who hath created male and female,*
- 4. Lo! your effort is dispersed (toward divers ends).*
- 5. As for him who giveth and is dutiful (toward Allah)*
- 6. And believeth in goodness;*
- 7. Surely We will ease his way unto the state of ease.*

- 17. Far removed from [the flaming Fire] will be the righteous*
- 18. Who giveth his wealth that he may grow (in goodness),*
- 19. And none hath with him any favor for reward,*
- 20. Except as seeking (to fulfil) the purpose of his Lord Most High.*
- 21. He verily will be content.*

By the night enshrouding and the day resplendent
And by Him Who male and female has created,
Effort you disperse, in blazing rays elated,
Wonder-ways diverse, on heaven-grace dependent.

As for him who gives, in duty well directed,
He a state of ease will gain, by Allah favored;
Given wealth will grow in goodness ever savored,
Nor descendants of the giver be neglected.

True content will come when you're contenting others;
Gratified desire in other's eye reflected—
This the means whereby your love may be detected.

Eden-parented, we're cousins, sisters, brothers;
Hungry are we all if one remain unsated:
Know the time is here for which the watchmen waited.

84.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO
SURA 100 "THE COURSERS"

1. *By the snorting coursers,*
2. *Striking sparks of fire*
3. *And scouring to the raid at dawn,*
4. *Then, therewith, with their trail of dust,*
5. *Cleaving, as one, the center (of the foe),*
6. *Lo! man is an ingrate unto his Lord*
7. *And lo! in the love of wealth he is violent.*

By the snorting coursers striking sparks of fire,
Scouring to the raid at dawn, with trail of dust,
Cleaving yet as one the center of the foe,
Lo! ungrateful witness Man, unto his Lord—
In the love of riches daily violent.

Some have found nobility of high desire
Shown in the chivalric willingness that must
Let the force be visible when light will grow,
Gold-caparisoned the horses' pounding horde
Into battle bearing soldiers onward sent.

Silver-snatchers, though, contrasting roles require,
Who will be consumed by one destructive lust.
Less protected are the greedy than they know,
Into whom the jinns a willfulness have poured
Till their pride at length is riven, reft, and rent.

PART 2



Lyrical Responses to the Qur'an and Other Sources

85.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
FROM SURA 1 "THE OPENING,"
QUATRAIN OF FITZGERALD/OMAR,
MESSAGE OF SHAHID ALAM

1. *Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. . . .*

*Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.*

—The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam,
trans. Edward FitzGerald

Behold an omen of the best of fates:
The fifteenth yours, and mine the twenty-first
Of April, birthdays proving what awaits
Two souls akin! Yet more: what I had versed

In answer gladly to "The Opening"
Unclosed the birthday- and the April-theme:
Of tree and rose and nightingale to sing—
And flame pyramidal and vernal dream—

And so proclaim that greening buds will burst
With swift no-longer-hidden mission: fling
The covering aside, wherein immersed
You germinated, now prepared to bring,

To Allah-Sun replying, springtime gleam—
I feel the opening of spirit-gates!

86.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE
FROM SURA 2 "THE COW,"
RUMI-THOUGHTS IN SCHIMMEL;
BLAKE VERSES

153. *O ye who believe! Seek help in steadfastness and prayer.
Lo! Allah is with the steadfast.*

Rumi . . . recur[s] to the famous grammarian Sibawayhi (d. ca. 770) in his definition of the word Allāh, for his explanation seems to show the deepest truth about God:

*That Sibawayhi said (that) the meaning of (the name
Allah (is that) they take refuge (yalahuna) with Him
in their needs.*

And he explains the statement of this scholar . . . :

*In the hour of affliction hundreds of thousands of
intelligent persons are all crying before that unique
Judge.*

*Nay, all the fish in the waves, all the birds in the lofty
region,*

*The elephant and the wolf and also the hunting lion, the
huge dragon and also the ant and the snake. . . .*

*This heaven is making entreaty unto Him incessantly—
'Do not forsake me, O God, for a single moment!'*

*And this earth says 'Preserve me, O Thou who hast caused
me to ride upon the water!'*

*Every prophet has received from Him the guarantee: Seek
help with Him with patience or prayer (Sura 1/153).*

—Annemarie Schimmel, *the Triumphal Sun*
(SUNY Press, 1993) 230

*The Bleat the Bark Bellow & Roar
Are Waves that Beat on Heavens Shore*

—William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence" ll. 71-2

Undaunted wave, snake, dragon, boar,
Dog, lion, cattle, bird, sheep, ant,
The elephant, the hierophant
Speak, bark, burn, bellow, hiss, bleat, roar!

All cries come in by open door:
Attention readily will grant
Jamāl, Jalāl: to Him we chant!
For *Mercy, Majesty* with more

Of grandeur than our worlds outpour
Will He in spirit-wind decant
When Rumi, Sufi, plead, implore:

With whirling world a-dance, don't scant
The skyward way; 'twill height restore.
Pray—rise! Say: *oro—orior*.

87.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A VERSE IN
SURA 2 "THE COW" AND THOUGHTS
IN ECCLESIASTES, GOETHE

260. *And when Abraham said (unto his Lord): My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead, He said: Dost thou not believe? Abraham said: Yes, but (I ask) in order that my heart may be at ease. (His Lord) said: Take four of the birds and cause them to incline unto thee, then place a part of them on each hill, then call them, they will come to thee in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.*

11.1 *Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.*

2. *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.*

*Should your mind to the question go
How generosity might flow,
Your cakes onto the water throw:
Who'll relish them you'll never know.*

—J. W. von Goethe, "Was willst du untersuchen,"
West-östlicher Divan, *Buch der Sprüche*

The tale of Abraham and of the birds:
A parable of generosity.
He tamed them when he gave them food, you see.
And now, in grandeur of Qur'anic words,

They'll come to him "in haste." And even so,
If bread upon the waters you should throw
(As when you pay the poor-due), great rewards
The act of mercy in itself accords.

The birds that gladly flew together when
Our Father called are like the souls of men
Who dead arise when Allah-summoned. All

Were poor, did not from mercy-height befall
The gifts that, wide outspread, are gathered by
The loved one and the Lover, world and sky.

88.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 16 "THE BEE" AND
RUMI-THOUGHTS IN SCHIMMEL

68. *And thy Lord inspired the bee, saying: Choose thou habitations in the hills and in the trees and in that which they thatch;*
69. *Then eat of all fruits, and follow the ways of thy Lord, made smooth (for thee). There cometh forth from their bellies a drink diverse of hues, wherein is healing for mankind. Lo! herein is indeed a portent for people who reflect.*

The bee, feeding on pure things—like the believer who is nourished by Divine light—possesses a house full of honey; since 'Thy Lord has inspired the bee. . .' (Sura 16/68) the house of its revelation is filled with sweetness. . .

. . . But man, in spite of the treasure of honey he possesses, often complains, like humming bees, and his breast can become restless and full of turmoil like a beehive for:

The heart has sipped from the friend's nectar every night . . . The movement of the bees is reminiscent of the samā'. Indeed, the 'dance of the bees' is used as a modern scientific term to denote this movement.

*—Annemarie Schimmel, The Triumphal Sun
(SUNY Press, 1993) 109*

The bees in livened waggle-dance
Are allegories of a trance
While yet a man in body bound
Reminding, in their rapid round,

That even as the creatures need
To show their fellows where to feed
On flowers, therefore signal send,
The fitful mind must find a friend.

The love that we on earth had won
When Allah, the Eternal Sun,
Us creatures each had made a "me"

Has lent unrest: we're never done
With whirl and stir, the benison
Disturbing dervish, bird, and bee.

89.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO VERSES
IN SURA 20 "TÂ HÂ" AND
RUMI-THOUGHTS IN SCHIMMEL

9. *Hath there come unto thee the story of Moses?*
10. *When he saw a fire and said unto his folk: Wait! Lo! I see
a fire afar off. Peradventure I may bring you a brand
therefrom or may find guidance at the fire.*
11. *And when he reached it, he was called by name: O Moses!*
12. *Lo! I, even I, am thy Lord. So take off thy shoes, for lo! thou
art in the holy valley of Tuwa.*

*The Divine Light hides itself in the form of fire—Divine Mercy
conceals itself under the guise of wrath. But Moses—the soul—
should know that once he enters the Most Holy, everything is
sheer beauty . . . :*

O Moses 'soul', put off your two shoes (Sura 20:12)

For in the rose garden of the soul there are no thorns!

*Rumi's favorite story from the Moses-tradition is that of his
miraculous rod which was turned into a serpent. Shams, called
the Moses of his time, is the prototype of the Beloved in whose
hand the lover is like the rod—sometimes a support for people,
sometimes a wild dragon. . . . But he may also say in a slightly
lighter variation that the stick 'separation from the friend'
resembles the rod of Moses which brings water out of stones,
namely 'out of the lover's eyes. . . .'*

*—Annemarie Schimmel, The Triumphal Sun
(SUNY Press, 1993) 179-180*

*The fire is light of love and wrath,
But thornless will the rosy path
Become for one whose godly goal
Is reached: the garden of the soul.*

Since God is love, should lover, spurned,
Be then from rod to serpent turned,
We, all the more deploring, see
A flame-forbidden Eden Tree!

In hand if held of one we love,
The rod, directed from above
To bring forth water from a stone,
From love-bereft will rend a moan.

Though bruised the head of Satan-snake,
'Tis Adam's progeny who take
The wounding pain when thrown aside
And so must in the dust abide.

Until Eternity entire
Encompass mortal-formed desire,
Reward from one our souls prefer
Is but a Heaven-harbinger.

90.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO LINES IN SURA 20
"TÂ HÂ"; GOETHE, FITZGERALD

with thanks to Katharina Mommsen

22. *And thrust thy hand within thine armpit, it will come forth
white without hurt. (That will be) another token.*

23. *That We may show thee (some) of Our greater portents,*

24. *Go thou unto Pharaoh! Lo! he hath transgressed (the
bounds).*

—trans. Marmaduke Pickthall

25. *(Moses) said: "O my Lord,
Expand me my breast;*

26. *Ease my task for me:*

27. *And remove the impediment from my speech. . . ."*

—trans. A. Yusuf Ali

*Ich möchte beten wie Moses im Koran: Herr, mach mir Raum in
meiner engen Brust. [I would like to pray as Moses in the Qur'an:
Lord, make me room within my narrow breast.]*

—J. W. von Goethe, Brief an J. G. Herder, Juli 1772 Wetzlar

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,

The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,

Where the White Hand of Moses on the bough

Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

—The Rubáiyât of Omar Khayyám, trans. Edward
FitzGerald

When Goethe wrote to Herder that he'd like

To say again the prayer Moses made,

"Lord, make me room within my narrow breast,"

He helped outspread forever to the world
A present both of soul-wrought poetry
And purest Muslim and Hebraic thought.

So Yusuf Ali aptly has conveyed
The wish for widened breast that Moses felt.
And now, like Herder getting Goethe's note,
I too am favored with a splendid gift:
White Moses-Hand, in shining wonder shown,
Remained with me: I hear Qur'anic words

Recalling verse that our FitzGerald made
In offering an Omar wisdom-treat
To one who'd kept the riddle forty years
To hear the meaning strikingly revealed
In lines of Pickthall's marvel-writing found.
The Lord our life may light in changing ways.

91.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO SURA 24
"LIGHT" AND RUMI-THOUGHTS IN
SCHIMMEL ON CALLIGRAPHY

35. *Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. . . .*

Jalālloḍin, like other Persian and Turkish writers, compares the perfectly beautiful face of the beloved to a masterfully calligraphed copy of the Koran. . . . For the friend's beauty is as flawless as a Koran copy has to be, and, exactly as the Holy Book reveals Divine wisdom and power, the beautiful face reveals God's beauty and creative power; it is, indeed, a Koran for those who know how to contemplate God's wisdom in its lines.

. . . And in a lovely verse he called the beloved to look at him, for:

I am a faulty (bāṭel) copy, but

I'll be corrected when you recite me.

For the Beloved overlooks the faults which spoil man, once honored more than the angels: he corrects him by accepting him as he is.

—Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*
(SUNY Press, 1993) 175

As Qur'an calligraphy
To the pious eye will be
Goodly, beautiful, and true,
Qualities I find in you,

So I know that I have owed
To your face, divine abode,
Welcome in the dwelling place
Of the favored ray of grace.

Yet, if eye that light receives
May create, as he believes
Who of Allah's ray will tell
That He made in creatures dwell,

When my faulty face you see,
Pardoning the flaws in me,
Read with God's creative light:
Shape reframe in kindly sight.

92.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO SURA 111 "PALM FIBRE" AND RUMI-THOUGHTS IN SCHIMMEL

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. *The power of Abû Lahab will perish, and he will perish.*
2. *His wealth and gains will not exempt him.*
3. *He will be plunged in flaming fire,*
4. *And his wife, the wood-carrier,*
5. *Will have upon her neck a halter of palm-fiber.*

*Weak are the hands of Lahàb, and his pride will alter.
His riches never did him any good,
He faces hell-fire, be it understood,
His wife will carry down a load of wood,
And her neck be oppressed by a fine palm-fiber halter.*

—trans. into German verse by Joseph von Hammer, tr. MB

In a fine pun the poet speaks of the wind which moves the twigs, whereas the tree-Heart is moved by an interior breeze (bād), namely the recollection (yād) of the Beloved. This breeze keeps it steadily a-dancing. Only those trees which are sapless and dry can no longer be moved by the wind of love and recollection; either their roots must be watered by [...] repentance, or else they must be cut off to be used as fire-wood for the ash-house: who would not think of Sura 111 where Abu Lahab's wife is called, for her faithlessness, "the carrier of fire-wood"?

—Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*
(SUNY Press, 1993) 87

Abiding pride is dying, dry,
And weighted down by wealth and gain
The hardened, loveless heart in pain
To ash-house turned from vanished sky.

The brisking wind of memory,
The darting lance from livened eye,
The lifted breeze let rendered be
What brings the tree-boughs Allah-nigh.

But withering, when once begun,
Continues till the ruin's done,
When but a firewood pile is left

Should mental strength, repentance-reft,
So lessened be that, water-shy,
The roots yet mortal-dormant, dry.

PART 3



Lyrics on Islam-Related Themes

93.

CONTEMPLATIONS (1)

My joy in life, best piety I know,
Appears a fount of sacred poetry.
No other topic may attract me now;
It sends me gladly back to my machine,
A keyboard for the music of the night

In quiet—where the seed of light may grow—
That mind-loam, grounding for an Eden tree;
To this I pray smaragdine Michael bow,
Whose wings will ever over Lote-Tree lean,
Green hue of hope inspiring to the sight.

That fourfold river under verdure flow
Is for the righteous a Divine decree:
I feel the current stir, I know not how.
I'm smit with love of sacred song, I've seen
A mighty force from lightning-horse alight.

94.

CONTEMPLATIONS (2)

O morning Prophet-Sun! My soul's afloat in light!
And lo! I send to you, in tribute, as it were
A laud of springtime birds a-borning, harbinger
Of more adoring song. Disciples benedight

Of Him that smiled and kindled with His fire the sky
(Ibn 'Umar, ibn Mas'ûd, Hudhaifa) scent of myrrh,
Of Eden-herb in air dispersing, will bestir
The hymning winds to lift their hidden hands on high.

In March arises ardor in a wild amaze—
Ev'n so, in bird of clay, on whom when Jesus breathed,
Expanded lungs made angel-room, wing'd creature seethed!

O bliss to be alive and chant my lines of praise:
Heart-jewel luminant, the least of these my days!
In part and whole, so white and rainbow-hued the rays.

95.

KHALĪD IBN SINĀN

His wish it isn't clear if he attained
Who prophethood had wanted, yet he dwells
In heaven always, though the Teacher tells
The seeker hoped that someday he'd have gained

Permission to confirm for souls below,
Between his death and Judgment Day, what we
As merit of the Prophet-friends could see
And tribute pay to those he joyed to know.

He loved so well Muhammad's Messengers!
That precious blessing even now confers
A pleasure to remember. Should the call

To speak of them come late, or not at all,
He patient will remain, for Wise Intent
Embodying, he yet fine lesson lent.

Among the twenty-seven sages whom
Ibn Arabi on pre-Dantescan tour
Of upper sky had interviewed, most pure
In wish and act, most fitted to illumine

The man convinced that every prophet had
A message he was gifted to convey
As no one else could do, I have to say
I solace feel, and wonder, and am glad

A place upon a height had been reserved
For one who from desire had never swerved
While waiting for a Summons from the Name.

Among the saints we honor him, and fame
To heart accord that with a strength unspent
Had treasured what Prophetic friendship meant.

96.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO GOETHE VERSES,
RUMI-THOUGHTS IN SCHIMMEL

*Wer schweigt, hat wenig zu sorgen;
Der Mensch bleibt unter der Zunge verborgen.*

—J. W. von Goethe, *Buch der Sprüche*, West-östliche Divan

*“Silent, you’re free of care:
Under the tongue—a man lies hiding there.” [tr. MB]*

Jalāloddin likes to compare the most divergent objects to a kettle or cauldron. . . . [an] image for the human heart, which is constantly boiling from the fire of divine love or wrath—and could a kettle be silent when the water starts boiling? The tongue is . . . comparable to the lid of the pot—when it moves, one smells what kind of food is contained in it, whether sweetmeat or vinegar-spiced stew. . . . [L]ater Sufis have compared Hallāj’s utterance ‘I am the Truth’ to the sound of the kettle in which the water was still in the process of boiling and not yet evaporated as silent steam: to voice one’s experiences is only the median stage on the mystical path.

—Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*
(SUNY Press, 1993) 148

The tongue as lid of spirit-pot!
Here Goethe’s meaning we have caught.
But speak a word, and you reveal
Aromas of your food-for-thought.

More nutritive must be the meal
That’s richly stewed and brewed, we feel.
A little movement of the lid
The secret savor will unseal.

And it were best that truth be hid
Until the moment when it’s rid

Of yet-unblended element:
The danger, haste, you may forbid.

The covering untouched, what's lent
Of energy by steam is sent
In quiet after water boils:
Ah, soul from body soon unpent!

And yet, why go? The poet toils,
Makes water pure, the soul unsoils,
By word of life unendingly
Where turbid wave in worldstream roils.

Though "I'm the Truth" may not be free
Of body, 'tis enough for me:
Uplift the lid of spirit-pot,
Reveal your generosity!

97.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A RUMI-THOUGHT
IN SCHIMMEL, VERSES OF SHAKESPEARE

[As] Rumi saw in the black stone of the Kaaba a symbol of the lip of his beloved, he has interpreted the zakāt, the legal alms, in a similar way and several times asks his beloved to pay the zakāt-e la'l, the tax due on rubies, i.e., to grant him a kiss from his ruby-like lips. This image is not rare in Persian lyrics.

—Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*
(SUNY Press, 1993) 293

*Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,
And being frank, she lends to those are free.
Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse
The bounteous largess given thee to give?
Profitless usurer, why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums yet canst not live? [.]*

—William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 4*

Mevlana, William recommend:
Who's granted beauty, let him spend
Such wealth and redistribute it
In ways the loving one sees fit.

A tax on rubies ought to be
On gem-lips levied soon, that he
Who has them share a kiss, not hoard
What he was granted by the Lord.

If handsome, never should a man
Withdraw, but rather, if he can,

Beget and thereby spread about
What lavishly was handed out.

Thus multiple will beauty live
And to the poor enrichment give:
The steward, then, of jewelry,
Investing windfall, you will be.

98.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO RUMI-
SCHIMMEL THOUGHTS ON RHYME

... Rumi has ... compare[d] the perfect lover to the samandar which sits in the midst of the fire –the possibility to combine the samandar with the qalandar, the carefree perfect dervish (since both words have the same meter) must have made this comparison particularly attractive for him.

The nightingale, bolbol, had been the favorite bird of the lyrical poets since old times: the fact that it most comfortably rhymes with gol, 'rose,' made the classical combination of rose and nightingale even more popular. Both are connected with spring, both with love.

—Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*
(SUNY Press, 1993) 113, 115

Wise rhyme of dervish, salamander!
The hoopoe shrewdly worked as pander
To Solomon; grand Alexander
Knew well the river god Scamander.

Who rules the Hebrews and the Greeks,
The fire-air-water Spirit, seeks
A miracle auricular
In stir of wing and wind of myrrh.

Wild rhyme of nightingale and rose!
While on the ground the flower glows,
In air a love unbounded grows
And heav'n-paired soul and body knows.

An Eden I reveal to you
Where morning-warmed the phoenix flew

Returning from the balm to blue;
Calm eagle-eye the Sun may view.

The type of all arising high,
Man-mercy-dew to perfect sky,
We feel when breathing in, no cry
But answer to the final Why.

99.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO THOUGHTS IN
SCHIMMEL ON LIGHT AND SHADOW

It is . . . participation in the light of Muhammad by which the true believer is distinguished, and when he has submerged himself in this primordial light, Hell will tell him: "Your light has extinguished my fire." For Hellfire, being created, is subject to extinction, whereas the Light of Muhammad is pre-eternal, and hence unchangeable.

*On a different level the concept of Muhammad as the *nar al-anwar*, "light of all lights," was connected with the legend that he did not cast a shadow. As Najm Razi explains, "he was, from one point of view, the sun, and the sun has no shadow," just as he was, from another point of view, "the monarch of religion," and "the monarch is God's shadow on earth," and a shadow has no shadow.*

—Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad
Is His Messenger* UNC Press, 1985) 129

Muhammad-light will supersede the fire of hell,
For light is love; and mortal punishment, as tell
The memories of menace-emblemings of old,
Lacks warmth of heart (And Dante's deepest hell is cold).

The Prophet cast no shadow? Had he shadow lacked,
Could he have then been man? We, race of Adam, racked
With fallibilities our labile nature gained
With failure in the Garden, pardoned are, yet pained.

Ah, but he was himself the shadow of his Lord!
So is the darkness of our mortal depth restored;
For we, unlike the One of pure and perfect light,
Require some chaos in our own creative might.

The tohu-bohu and the Soul that hovered by
 Upon the primal deep combine below the eye
 Of One who with the lightning of the steed Buraq
 In grace the Prophet raised *by Night!* and brought him back.

100.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO A DREAM
INTERPRETATION BY RUMI IN SCHIMMEL

The Prophet is also seen as the seed and fruit of creation, or as the great tree—a reflection of ancient myths of the Cosmic Tree or the Tree of Life. Maulana Rumi interpreted someone's dream of a tree at the shore of the ocean as follows: "That endless ocean is the Greatness of God Most High, and that huge tree is the blessed existence of Muhammad and the branches of this tree are the ranks of the prophets and stations of the saints, and those big birds are their souls, and the different tunes they sing are the mysteries and secrets of their tongues."

—Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger* (UNC Press, 1985) 131

A dream is many-meaning'd, speaking of the One;
In Shams, Allāh we mirrored see, another sun.
And thus the wailing flute for ancient reed-bed longs
When Rumi plays in praise of Him the hymning songs.

The tree whose rushing wind-swept leaves an anthem pour
Will echo surge of whirling sea beyond the shore.
The branches that extend to heaven's warming ways
But imitate the Friend's embracing morning rays.

The blazing birds that perch on huge and hardy boughs
Recall the giant angels Allah-grace allows
To live at farthest bound, where near the Jujube Tree
Archangel Michael's greening jewel-wing we see.

The vast prophetic ranks and stations of the saints
The ramifying tree in allegory paints:
The birds that are their souls and chant the Mystery
Are emblems of the will to sing instilled in me.

101.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO THOUGHTS
IN SCHIMMEL ON AḤMAD

'Attar ... alludes to ... one of God's extra-Koranic revelations, Anā Aḥmad bilā mīm, "I am Ahmad without the m," that is, Ahad, "One." ... 'Attar ... knows that when

the radiance of the light of manifestation became evident, the m of Ahmad became invisible, that is, only God the One remained.

... It seems to prove that Ahmad-Muhammad is separated from God only by a single letter, the m. In the Arabic numeric system this letter has the value of 40, the number of patience, maturing, suffering, preparation. (Israel was for forty years in the desert; Jesus spent forty days in the desert; Muhammad was forty when his calling came; the forty days of Lent; the forty days of complete retirement as practiced by the Sufis ... ; these ... are expressions of the special role of the number 40.) ... A later poet in the Panjab has called the m "the shawl of humanity," which the One God put on when he created Muhammad in his exemplary role ... and it is often called the "letter of contingency."

*—Annemarie Schimmel, And Muhammad Is His
Messenger (UNC Press, 1985) 117*

At forty will begin a life of greater height;
We've passed the number-factor of contingency
And have a chance to form essentiality.
So, angel-aided, on the Recitation Night

Muhammad in a cave discovered that the might
Of Allah would remove the human shawl that He
Brought on in Prophet-making, and His light would be
With Ah(m)ad blended who was "one" by heaven-right.

So Israel forty years, and Jesus forty days
In desert had to stay; and Sufi training ways
Require a forty-day retirement discipline.

At forty I a liberation found within
Awareness of an aim for latter years, and now
At sixty-six, the Allah-number, glad I bow.

102.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO THOUGHTS
IN SCHIMMEL ON MARY

[There is a . . .] popular tradition according to which [Muhammad's mother] Amina was attended during her labor by Asiya and Mary. [. . .] Asiya is Pharaoh's believing wife who looked after the infant Moses, and Mary as Christ's virgin mother occupies along with her, and even more than she, a place of honor in Islamic piety.

—Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His
Messenger* UNC Press, 1985) 151

Yes, many women are to blest Eternity
Admitted, and among them the Perfected Four
Of whom tradition told. Asiya would adore
The God of Moses, turning from idolatry;

The Prophet's daughter and his wife in Heav'n we see
And Mary, who a spirit-angel said would be
The mother chaste of Jesus, whom she duly bore;
The labor pains were great, but Allah would restore

Her calm and happiness with sudden wonders twain:
A date-palm and a stream appeared and eased her pain.
Amina could from brave Asiya comfort gain,

While Mary occupies, and even more than she,
A place of honor in Islamic piety.
We're grateful for the grace and kindness of the three.

103.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO THOUGHTS
IN SCHIMMEL ON BUSIRI

... Muhammad al-Bursiri (d. 1298) [wrote a poem] which soon became famous as Al-Burda. ... According to legend the poet had suffered a stroke and ... turned to the Prophet and wrote a poem in his honor. [Muhammad] appeared to Busiri in a dream and cast his mantle over him. ... Busiri was healed by the touch of the Prophet's mantle and could again move about the next morning.

"Answering his call, the trees came, prostrating themselves,

.....

*As if they were drawing a line for the delightful writing
That their branches wrote in the middle of the road. ..."
The Prophet is, as Busiri sings in an oft-imitated verse,
"Like a flower in tenderness and like the full moon in glory,
Like the ocean in generosity and like time in grand intentions."*

*—Annemarie Schimmel, And Muhammad Is His
Messenger (UNC Press, 1985) 181, 186*

*Orpheus could soothe the savage race,
And trees, uprooted, left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre.*

—John Dryden, "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day"

*Muhammad felt as if awaking from the dead,
The Recitation over, but was comforted
By dear Khadija, who her cloak upon him spread.*

*Busiri knew, as well, a holy healing pow'r,
And so the Prophet he would picture at the hour
When trees new motion-strength received by Prophet-
dow'r.*

He sighted them as poets writing on the road,
Recalling Michael in the Garden of Abode,
In piety surrendered where Muhammad strode.

The Prophet he would laud: a flow'r in tenderness;
The love-filled moon unfolded, silver-lit, to bless;
The rolling ocean, gold, emboldened in largesse.

For kind Allàh the man in majesty had sent,
To salve the anguished with a balm emollient,
To widen writer's mind like time with grand intent.

104.

LYRICAL RESPONSE TO THOUGHTS
IN SCHIMMEL ON THE ASCENT

*after reading Ch. 9 "The Prophet's Night Journey and
Ascension" in Annemarie Schimmel, And Muhammad
Is His Messenger (UNC Press, 1985)*

Before Muhammad could ascend the seventh sphere,
Like that of Jacob was the angel-ladder he
Would climb to Gate of Guard. Though viewing presently
Both Abraham and Jesus (we, astonished, hear

It may have been with eye, or heart) the Lord (I fear
To think—one faints away . . .) right after seeing hell
(Embezzlers of an orphan's money—how they swell,
The bellies big and filled with fire!) he, 'twould appear,

Was but a moment gone, for in his room the bed
Felt warm when he returned; the pitcher at the head—
Though it was overturned when he'd been swept away—

Was not yet emptied of its water. Sufis pray
An *ibnu'l waqt*, son of the moment, so to be—
All hell and heaven—more:—the Lord!—in soul to see.

105.
HAPPY RUMI'S BIRTHDAY!

September thirtieth have some declared to be
The day of entry when the player on the flute
Whose wailing is a longing for its reedy bed
Had called the flame, the whirl from out the hov'ring cloud

And, having waited for the autumn rain when he
Would feel the mercy pour its power to the root
Of being, viewed the brighter Sun shine through and said
To them that, blinded by the blazing flare, had bowed:

'Tis all a dervish-dance, the Adam-atoms we,
Who in the living tree, ground, blossom, bough, and fruit,
Stand fast in rapid motion, blest and comforted,
To hymn the other side of silence, choiring loud.

Forgiving, patient pardoners, the dark we see
In corners of the cold where morning yet is mute:
Be, Mind, a seed of light arising from the dead!
Be, Soul, a gyroscope! Be, heart, to height avowed!

106.

HYMN ON READING A STORY,
"THE ETERNAL ROSE"

with gratitude to its author, Avidah Shashaani

The Prophet came to one that knew how grieving glows,
As Rumi-flute that wailing moans in graying gloam
To seek the bed of reeds, her dear and distant home.
The hundredth name of God revealed he to the rose.

In fragrant sighing wise, she guessed what Allah knows:
The tearlike dewdrops are a mercy nightly sent,
And grace for pain, although detained, at length is lent.
The hundredth name of God revealed he to the rose.

The man received *amāna*, gift of trust. There flows,
From this, ability to love the rose and thorn:
In Mary's grievous labor pain was Jesus born.
The hundredth name of God revealed he to the rose.

Affliction, *Bāla*; *balà*, affirmation—those
Great wisdom principles unlock our mortal door.
The Cleaver of the Daybreak takes and will restore.
The hundredth name of God revealed he to the rose.

A dwelling in the Garden will the souls enclose
That inner sweetness have expended as did she
Whose petals ninety-nine are ample hymnody:
The hundredth name of God revealed he to the rose.

The Sun upraised the dew from soil that Iblis froze:
The land was new, en clothed in green, and so returned
A vernal Joseph-shirt to Jacob-soul that yearned.
The hundredth name of God revealed he to the rose.

Came Adam forth from 'adam. 'Mid the void there grows,
Emerging from that womb, the joy that cannot spurn
A birthing darkness. Love from suffering we learn.
The hundredth name of God revealed he to the rose.

In Hafiz' heart was *alif* etched. We presuppose
A One to reattain, although the moon in two
Appears divided. Sun, my brother-eye, is You.
The hundredth name of God revealed he to the rose.

107.

AFTER WRITING A HYMN ON
"THE ETERNAL ROSE"

for Avideh Shashaani

For this, the paradox-and-parable profound,
Friend Ávideh, you have my heartfelt gratitude.
The newly hallowed flow'r a commentator wooed
Who, lo! arose from out the frore November ground

And now may hope the further lure of lyric sound
Wherewith the Prophet golden-tongued the grace accrued
May fruitfully portray the richness of the mood
His lore poured forth, as cornucopias abound

Of grace in age when we, in kindly thought enwound
As by the autumn whirlwind that the wood, bestrewed
With leaves, each one a *zarra*-mote in sun-fire crowned,

In wind of surf-like surge will echo, rough and rude
Approach of the encroaching cold by spell subdued
Of music, harm turned harmonies, that feuds occlude.

108.
FOR AVIDEH SHASHAANI

Far humbler, you, and more devoted far than I.
Self-portrait of a servant at the heaven-gate
The face of the Beloved, patient, to await;
Or fledgling bird whose flight will Mother gratify—

Believer's gift are these, who looking to the sky
A guardian envisions, not in regal state
A monarch diademed. Instead, you elevate
The *caritas* of care. Your kindness tells me why.

And yet you have a bravery that will elate.
From rose would praise arise within a heartfelt sigh:
The moan of loneliness foretold that aid was nigh.

The flow'r and nightingale have no unworthy fate:
From one, aromas; from the other, hymns will fly
Toward the open Ear, delight the shining Eye.

109.

AFTER A SONG ON A
SCRIPTURE VERSE

The mages at their evening meal
Beyond the Utmost Boundary
Beneath the spreading Jujube Tree
A strong melodic impulse feel.

While nightingales around them wheel
They look into the houri-eyes
And instantly are mighty, wise,
Prepared in music to reveal

The harmony that here they see
In speech wherein the blest ideal
That deep in godly sun ray lies

Will, Eden-wine-instilled, arise
By grace, our human grief to heal,
Above our highest wild surmise.

110.
PRELUDE AND THOUGHTS ON RUMI

for Andrei Gureanu

(1) Prelude

How marvelous to hear my writing helped arouse
The coronal of lyric you'd be asked to wreath
To favor winners of a merited award.
I wish I could have gone along: I fell asleep—

Appointments in the morning over, and the drowse
Allowed my ear no sound. More gladly, though, I breathe
In thankfulness for being able to afford
The joy of panegyric verse, which with a leap

By flame a-borning in replying mind, the boughs
Wind-vigored, soughing, set a-dance, let carmine seethe
Amid the green, two symbol colors in accord
With circulating life in me and tree: to sweep

Of wind, nepheliadic amplitude allows
The rolling, soaring soul to grow, that quick will teethe
Upon the challenge of the cunning winter, sword
To meet with rising riant will, though willows weep.

(2) Thoughts on Rumi

When I am gone my lines in myriads will attest
The force that made the coursers of the waning day,
A herald each, escarbuncled, in flaming ray
Resistless, from the hearth of hardness arrest

The entropy that said, in sigh the wiliest,
"To calm then come, for there is balm for them astray
In striving undirected, wasting one away."
Star, burst!—before you're borne to be immersed in rest.

The Rumi flute will sound auroral roundelay
That Pleiades had dreamed till summoned by the One
Who'll ride the Steed in rutilant caparison,

And Zohra, Jesus, in the fourth and warming sphere
Will greet, for she is Venus and will sweet endear
The traveler and him to dance. Mevlana, play!

111.
SAPERE AUDE

*after reading K. Mommsen's Dubai lecture
dealing with Goethe's West-östlicher Divan*

If we to Goethe and his "twin"
(A brother who the goals would gain
That he had seen for whom the twain
Of West and East are one) will in

A spirit-swift mobility
Reply in heart and harken to
The humanly-including view
That you have shown and shared with me,

We'll then be free of fool-crusades
That close the mind which only aids
A soul-defeating death-in-life

With hate-benighted blindness rife.
Let there be light. And let there be
Enlightened minds awake to see.

112.
DIALOGUES

for Melissa Free

Prescribe the best reply to lines that move
The air with music and the heart with love
When from the art of poet who immersed
The mind we rise more purely pluriversed:

A poem will another one beget
For lo, the door is open whence we let
The horses of the blue unloosed emerge
In pegasean rush of windblown surge.

(An older, sadder Santayana wrote
The *Dialogues in Limbo*. Tired ...) Afloat
A whirl besprent by flute of skylark throat

In anthem schooled me, dithyramb to speak
To lightning-riding writers we critique!
To them ascend: Buraq will lack no Lote.

113.
THOUGHTS ON DIALOGUE

The spray that's blown from cresting wave
To me a tone unresting gave,
A motion that shall never die
When sighing oceans rend the sky.

The current-whirr will lift inside
The bowing heart the pounding tide:
Our larger mindful ardent star,
When sent through heaven large and far

And sired by light, would spend in space
Galactic fire, to granted grace
An amplitude return, and be
More worthy of eternity.

.....

I will reply in sound to what I'm lent in light;
I will reply in word to world a-bursting bold.
I answer in a meter to my heartbeat-might;
I answer with a clamor the command of old.

And when a jinn may jeer at me I, calm, respond,
And when the stormy horde is roaring I reply,
And if at dawn the rain a riddle whisper fond,
I answer in a soft susurral to the sky.

.....

Jim Haba, of the Geraldine R. Dodge
Foundation, caused a ripple of surprise:
He claimed a poll showed triple terror lies
In hearts American. Deep fears that lodge

In souls! In rising order: death and cancer,
Then, worst and first, the fear of "public speaking"—
The sky-desire whose fiery height I'm seeking!
My only horror: speak, and—hear no answer ...

I want a dialogue. How can it be
Accomplished if no hearer climb with me?
While riding flying horse with lightning-might,

I, like the Wise One on Reciting Night,
Was angeled and am changed, in mercy lent
To disconfirm constraining firmament.

114.

THANKSGIVING WISHES FOR MY
FRIENDS OF EAST AND WEST

Be granted happiest of lives! May harvest moon
That oranger than pumpkin coming to foretell
To them a blessing who the way to living well
Invoke as cornucopia while with my rune

I sing a fetter-melting gentle wind that soon
Avails whoever harkens to the ardent spell
That counters in the fall the cold (wherein the fell
Arimanēs of Winter cries) with druid-croon.

While in the tranquil phantom night the quiet moves,
The fingers on the cipher-keys will tap a tune
That breathing will renew, that care will ever quell:

The lightning horse unloosed, the height of hope behooves
The primed s pry-minded rider on the dawn-bestrewn
And flying back astride, the sky-will to impel.

115.

THOUGHTS ON MOHAMMED
MARMADUKE PICKTHALL,
TRANSLATOR OF THE QUR'AN

for Katharina Mommsen

The Pickthall English text—why does it draw so many more
Replies than anyone had guessed, a cornucopial store?
As Luther's Bible Bach's cantata-lyric writers made
Alert to show they'd caught his drift, their riches to unlade,

And as the version authorized for British reading stirred
Traherne and Herbert, Vaugh'n and Crashaw, blissful, with
the Word,

So Pickthall, skillful Englishman, has made a text that
claims,

I'd say, to be a brave Qur'anic answer to King James.

Elizabethan, Jacobean, tone of Shakespeare-time
Is what I hear, requesting me, yes, begging, that I rhyme,
As did the poets called baroque, in England, Germany,

The wisdom of the will to language-forming setting free
A strength, a vigor as of oak, that will cor-*robor*-ate
The holiness of olden growth, today remaining great.

116.

KONYA: MEVLANA MEMORIAL

alcaic strophes for Philipp Restetzki

x/ x/ x/ xx/ x/
 x/ x/ x/ xx/ x/
 x/ x/ x/ x/x
 /xx /xx /x /x

As cool as rill of Eden, or purer wine
 That they may only know who their Maker pleased
 And so are served by youths and houris
 Favored with silken and gold adornment,

The all-embracing claim of the Rumi-flute
 That loves the planet-whirl and the whirr of wind
 And knows the faithful desert camel
 (Like the Qur'an, he'll attend us daily),

Enfolds the hearts of all in the em'rald shrine
 Amid enriched calligraphy, heavy weaves
 Portraying Sufi journey stages
 (Forty the days of the purifying),

That we in fellow beings may see the Sun
 Whom Rumi knew in Shams, the companion sage
 And, later, Salahuddin Zarkub,
 Goldsmith and whirler and Sufi-pupil.

117.

GREEN MAUSOLEUM

*after reading Annemarie Schimmel, "What Is Sufism" in
Mystical Dimensions of Islam (UNC Press, 1985)*

"Mevlana" is the name you'll hear
In Konya: though the poet's dear
To all who feel the dancing fire,
Unknown is "Rumi" to the ear.

Smaragdine-tiled, the conic spire
To culminated soul-desire
Will point, in pre-eternal One
Where naught had severed child and sire.

For supersolar is the Sun
Whom when the lover's day is done,
He, coming after sorrow sore
Is over, should the race be won

For pardon, and with *nafs* the war
Be ended that so heavy bore
Upon the whirler who'll unlade
A worldly weight, must love the more.

The one-in-many banyan-shade,
The jasmine that remembrance made
With mercy-dew, in gladness grown
By favor that shall never fade,

Are ways the Treasure may be shown.
By all who read this be it known:
They most are bold that Love revere.
Attuned, at one, we thus atone.

118.

COMMENT ON EARLIER POEMS

for Johanna Masters

My rhythms, near-unaltered from the holy writ,
I needed but to hear, admire, and emulate—
A psalming to convey unknown before in verse,
From Pickthall-phrasing falling, lyric Eden tree.

When fell the fruit into the lap of Mary, it
Was such a wonder as I never would await
Until in scripture eager spirit I'd immerse,
By intimation rare awakened flaringly.

To labor pains and thirst and hunger well would fit
The present to the Virgin-prayer—spring, and date
Extended from the branching palm of alms, with terse
And timely invitation: Eat, from fever free.

I hope, by writing wisely, truly to transmit
The calm that, following the Virgin-gift, the great
Returning favor will like mercy-dew asperse
That freshened earth can wed to her eternity.

119.

TIMEPIECE ON A THEME BY EMERSON
(1803-1882)

after an evening of reading Omar

"He who has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare,
And he who has one enemy will meet him everywhere."

Imagination craves to act. It amplifies.

The brain-fed devil so will overspread the skies.

Mind-channel narrows; brooding overloads.

The huge, intensive enmity explodes.

Beware: the spinning shrapnel shards

Bring death into the heart of bards.

Concentered, redisperse:

More pure, the pluriverse.

A new ascent

For you is meant,

Who've grown

A stone.

A phoenix-rise

Within you lies:

A ruby-red Phoenician

Let be the heart-physician.

Send lordly rhythm through the air,

Co-ordinate the starlights there

In brilliant hymn of cloud-including thought

By widest-breathing vigor-wind begot,

For time's a mercy, firm the promise of the void:

Let art alembicate what sorrowed, overjoyed.

May soul stay open as the moment flows. The mind aware,

That in a tidal measure lives, on flight immense may fare.

120.
EAST-WEST HYMN

for Johanna Masters

The gift that we are lent, the piercing pow'r wherewith
Our eye's endowed, that we may reach, perceive the pith,
Will mean the border we unlearn perturbs no more;
One sunlight we discern: the kernel-and-the-core.

The symmetry, twi-sided, of our every act
Bespeaking, like to that of dark and light, the pact
That chaos with creation daily yet will bind
To me has meant that death-and-life may hearts unblind.

The tyger not more fiery, eagle not more sry,
Ascending heav'n we find the sphere-concentric eye
Wherein the lightning-steed is imaged: this He rode
Who'd closely apprehend the Garden of Abode.

Here, vast of wing, smaragdine-lighted, Michael we
May view on hugely-boughed, ground-rooted Jujube Tree.

121.

JOTTED RUBÁIYÁT

I'm not of those who imitate
The word-caprices of the great:
To form your ownmost hidden speech,
Remember, is your high estate.

You'll not be lesser than the best
If hasted by a high behest
With kindred sun the ray to reach
That kindled all the mightiest.

Of Allah's dawn are you and I,
And like Adonis we will die.
Osiris we, the fertile flood
Alive in Isis' tearful cry.

They in themselves have Nile and light
Who envy's blast and canker-blight
With knowledge conquer of the blood
That lit the sky the other night.

122.

RUMI-FIRES AND RUMI-REDS

thoughts on photos by Louise Fairfax

I gazed at the ranuncular, the rosy red,
And thirdly at the rhododactyl sunset, led
To place them all together in a blended thought
And laughed out loud!—my happy ganglion so wrought

By One Who needed evermore outspread to be
A rising line of light to strike the likes of me
With wonder at the blood whose color from the rays
The carnal Adam's flooded, avid brain will daze.

The clay is red of which the man was made, that I
My life might see encircling me upon the sky.
More rutilant than ruby, ruddier than blood
The hue that Rumi-atoms muffled in the mud

Would see assuming when, renewed in spirit-scope,
With flaming blent, they'd view an Eden-green of hope.
Your awe and want the Persian gloaming nightingale
Will know, who croons to bloom a lonely roamer's tale.

123.

RUMI-SOUNDINGS

Ah, coolest hue of blue in Rumi-flute—
Remarkable!—and with his heart of fire
That brightened the horizon with desire,
Ethereal sphere so heated! Lyre and lute

With comparable calm the troubadour
Would play, like spice upon the phoenix pyre
Where our Mevlana-soul would whirl 'mid choir
Of nightingales, friend righteous to the Pure.

The holy Spirit used the aery route
Of peace, in willing ear its might entire
Advancing in tranquillity, to suit

The Virgin undisturbed, who would require
That "Let It Be!" in tonal shape ensure
The deeper Word prepare her to endure.

124.
REMEMBERING RUMI

Lord Tennyson with F. H. Bradley had conversed.
The latter said he hoped that after he had died
The world might be a bit improved because he'd tried
To help his fellow man. The former was immersed

In quite another search, aim distantly espied:
The Laureate aspired to hope that there might burst
Upon his soul in bliss, before fate did her worst,
A clearer vision of the God he glorified.

These men and goals are wise, and both I've pondered well.
But of a Rumi-born desire I want to tell:
When I have died, I pray they'll say: A wonder-spell

He cast of mantic love: the vatic and the vast
He molded into woven tone; the soul bound fast
Enwound in gown of godly sound, the light would last.

125.

TWO ISLAM-RELATED LETTERS TO
FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES

Cover Letter For A Poem

For Thomas Ogger

Hi, Thomas, I've corrected the beginning lines,
For, since I write with *Schwung-und-Rausch* rapidity,
Delayed reactions will occur, how frequently!
The deep cerebral eye, behind the heart-designs,

Can't quite catch up—a hapless hazard—one I share
With love-epistle writers, for I am in love
With skies and writing. Rumi, aiming high above
All barriers to Shams, moved breath, a tuneful air

In music borne of blue-and-white, the low-throat flute
That like a homeward-flying stork, delighted finds
The fields of Turkey are one Sheba-soft perfume

To laud the Sun that will our skiey lives illumine
While jinns help germinate our world-tree at the root—
Be stayed with apples, Allah's Eden-flagon wine!

A Midnight Vision

for Philip Nikolayev

The night arrived. Now fragrant winds caress
The Solomonic mind, awake, aware:
I sent my letter quickly through the air
On wing'd electron-steed, that mages bless—

By name Buraq, which Lightning meant, no less.
My lines will fly in fire, that flowers fair—
By houris tended, lively, debonair
And heaven-favored in their gentillesse—

Not lose the rainbow hue of silken dress
And lightning-saying of the sages rare
Who, served with sherbet, all the comeliness

Of grace put on, the surer cure for care,
The Garden-wine more light than one may guess—
Their Rumi-dance illumined, robes aflare!

126.
ISLAMIC ROSE

for Louise Fairfax

"Below, so too above"—the triply great
And ancient mage declared, and thus we find
The Florentine, with floriculture-mind,
Would paint a bloom of saints in heav'nly state.

A comparable image will elate
The Muslim: on the rose we contemplate
Are all the names of Allah, ninety-nine,
Which face, to complement the flow'r divine,

Another blossom—total, here, the same,
Including every heaven-sacred name
Of brave Muhammad, Mercy to the World.
Whose petals Allah-fragrance have unfurled—

Celestial growth your soul can re-create:
A holy twofold strength we celebrate.

127.
FLIGHT AND RETURN

for Johanna Masters

Bucephalus and Pegasus,
If old, are better known to us
Than wonder-horse of nearer lore,
To me more dear than those before.

Though it appear the riskier,
To Lightning-Steed do I prefer
Alluding who with ludic speed
Through heav'n in high career would heed

The call of Allah, and would bear
The Prophet mid the sphery air,
By way of Venus and of Mars
And all the seven wand'ring stars,

From Mecca to Jerusalem
To speak with Jesus and with them
Whom scripture of the Jews had shown.
In soul, the poet, too, has flown

Where often, ever radiantly,
A novel sphere of thought he'd see,
Whence let the mind from dream descend—
Of Rider tell, and of his friend.

128.

THE PROPHET RIDES

When Mallarmé declared that in an hour
When Hegel said the reign of poetry
Was over, yet there evermore might be
A writing of a rare, unclouded pow'r

Affianced to a kind of climbing free
Of earth and air and beast and bird and flow'r,
Unwilling, with its wider eye, to cow'r
Before Minerval bird, but steadily

To sing beyond the syntheses that he,
With all his oneness-thunder, might foresee,
And, seeking no embodied topic, tow'r

Beyond all holiness but soul-brought dow'r,
Did he foretell the well in Moses-me,
To wet for desert bread the manna-flour?

Have yet we kept the calm of psalmody
And of the Solomonic Eden-bow'r
Wherein it mattered not that fiend might glow'r
If by the height of Sheba-love that she

Aroused in him, that prophet-king, the giaour
Would be defeated when the sov'reignty
Of proverb wisdom conquered, foe would flee,
And God's abundant gold would outward show'r?

Muhammad on Buraq eternally
Must mean that if humanity, as plower,
Make damp the field with grieving teardrop, we

Will reap the gleaming, though in gloaming lour
The storm where jinns of Iblis in their glee
May roar. We've higher lightning, secret key.

129.

FLOWER ARRANGING, WITH
A HINT FROM HÂFIZ

for Katharina Mommsen

From listening to Haydn's early symphonies
That Fischer leads, with every note the poet chose
In place arrayed—so tulip, daffodil, and rose
Had Hâfiz, with a hope a wayward love to please,

Picked both for symbol and for color-highlight—those
For ample flattery, for generousities
Of tribute to a prince with vital eyes, and these
To emblem a devotion lines can not uncloze—

I come to my Divan endearing, here to pose
A subtle timbre-query, as a Japanese
Would ponder if a lily, pure in sympathies,

Would complement a high chrysanthemum that grows
More kind along the whiteness, or: might golden glows
Near boldened rutilance of tulip gleam with ease?

130.

A WINTER HYMN

Though days be gray and nights grow long,
Bestirred are they who know that song
Will higher climb than Everest,
For motive strength will never rest

In those whom poetry has lent
A will to tread the firmament
Extending, wide, above the earth
Where the melodious winds have birth.

The world will shed her winter sheath.
The Bo tree Buddha wakes beneath.
And giant angels make a wreath

Within the Garden of Abode
Upon the Jujube Tree, whose load
Of em'ralds gleamed when God had glowed.

131.
JINN AND ANGEL

Before beginning to correct
The errors due to my neglect
I open up the heaven-door
And hear what limpid souls outpour,

That each reside in form unseen
To me: in glory these, between
The world and spirit, words entwined
In chirrup-cheer like Eden-wine.

When jinns of error enter, we
May pardon well their jealousy
And prisoned will in fetter-fire

Since all shall suffer who desire
Yet have not learned in time to bow
To higher light: I'll try it now.

Appendix I

Islamic Traditional Sayings about Beauty

Contributed by Prof. Dr. Taha Ibrahim Ahmed Badri

SAYINGS FROM THE QUR'AN

- 1 *Qur'an 67:5. And verily We have beautified the world's heaven with lamps [...]*
- 2 *Qur'an 50:6. Have they not then observed the sky above them, how we have constructed it and beautified it, and how there are no rifts therein?*
- 3 *Qur'an 40:64. Allah it is Who appointed for you the earth for a dwelling-place and the sky for a canopy, and fashioned you and perfected your shapes, and hath provided you with good things. Such is Allah your Lord. [...]*
- 4 *Qur'an 23:12. Verily We created man from a product of wet earth; 13 Then placed him as a drop (of seed) in a safe lodging; 14 Then fashioned We the drop a clot, then fashioned We the clot a little lump, then fashioned We the little lump bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, and then produced it as another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of Creators!*

SAYINGS FROM THE SUNNA [HADITH]

- 1 *God is beautiful and loves beauty. (Saḥiḥ Muslim)*
- 2 *God is beautiful and loves beauty, and He loves chastity. (Saḥiḥ Muslim)*
- 3 *God is beautiful and loves beauty, and He loves generosity. (From Islamic teachings)*
- 4 *O Allah, as you have fashioned my external form, so beautify my character as well. (Musnad Aḥmad)*

FROM THE SAYINGS, PROVERBS,
AND ADAGES OF THE ARABS

- 1 *Be beautiful, then you will see the entire universe as beautiful. (Elia Abu Madi, Lebanese poet: 1890–1957)*
- 2 *Beauty is a paradise for the eyes and a mirror for the heart. (Arabic proverb)*
- 3 *Beauty is the adornment of souls and prepares joy in life. (Arabic proverb)*
- 4 *Beauty lies not only in outer appearance but also in the qualities of one's character and deeds. (Arabic saying)*
- 5 *Beauty of spirit brightens the soul and streams forth from the eyes. (Arabic saying)*
- 6 *Beauty arises from belief, uprightness, and purity. (Arabic saying)*
- 7 *Beauty is not only what the eyes see but what touches the heart and will spur the spirit. (Arabic saying)*
- 8 *True beauty is shown in chastity, modesty, and boldness. (Arabic saying)*

9 *From the beauty in nature we know good fortune, joy, and the steady striving for the best. (Arabic saying)*

10 *Visit the garden once a week so you will know the gift of God in the beauty of Nature. (Arabic saying)*

11 *Beauty is found in the soul before it reaches the body. (Khalil Gibran, Lebanese poet and philosopher 1883–1931)*

Appendix II

The Meanings of the Names of God

Contributed by Shahid Alam to clarify the stained glass calligraphies on the cover and also the frontispiece

- 1 Ar-Rahman The Beneficent
- 2 Ar-Rahim The Merciful
- 3 Al-Malik The King
- 4 Al-Quddus The Holy
- 5 Al-Salam The Peace
- 6 Al-Mumin The Defender of the Faith
- 7 Al-Muhaymin The Protector
- 8 Al-Aziz The Almighty
- 9 Al-Jabbar The Compeller
- 10 Al-Muktabbir The Sublime, the Great
- 11 Al-Khaliq The Creator
- 12 Al-Bari The Creator from Nothingness
- 13 Al-Musawwir The Giver of Form
- 14 Al-Ghaffar The Forgiving
- 15 Al-Ghaffar The Overthrower
- 16 Al-Wahhab The Giver of Loans
- 17 Ar-Razzaq The Granter, Preserver
- 18 Al-Fattah The Opener, Liberator
- 19 Al-Alim The Omniscient
- 20 Al-Qabid The Refuser
- 21 Al-Basit The Granter, Imparter

- 22 *Al-Khafid* The Abater, Curtailer
- 23 *Al-Rafi* The Upraiser, Exalter
- 24 *Al-Muizz* The Respector
- 25 *Al-Mudhill* The Abaser
- 26 *As-Sami* The All-Hearing
- 27 *Al-Bahir* The All-Seeing
- 28 *Al-Hakam* The Judge
- 29 *Al-Adl* The Upright
- 30 *Al-Latif* The Noble, Gracious
- 31 *Al-Khabir* The Aware
- 32 *Al-Halim* The Mild
- 33 *Al-Azim* The Magnificent
- 34 *Al-Ghafur* The Forgiving
- 35 *Al-Shakur* The Grateful
- 36 *Al-Ali* The High, Sublime
- 37 *Al-Kabir* The Great
- 38 *Al-Hafiz* The Supporter, Maintainer
- 39 *Al-Muqit* The Strengtheners
- 40 *Al-Hasib* The Settler of Accounts
- 41 *Al-Jalil* The Majestic
- 42 *Al-Karim* The Kindly
- 43 *Al-Raqid* The Observer
- 44 *Al-Mujib* The Responsible, The Counselor
- 45 *Al-Wasi* The All-encompassing, the Universal
- 46 *Al-Hakim* The Wise
- 47 *Al-Wadud* The Loving
- 48 *Al-Majid* The Celebrated
- 49 *Al-Baith* The Awakener of the Dead
- 50 *Ash-Shahid* The Witness
- 51 *Al-Haqq* The Truth
- 52 *Al-Wakil* The All-Powerful
- 53 *Al-Qawi* The Strong
- 54 *Al-Matin* The Firm, Steady
- 55 *Al-Wali* The Appreciative Friend
- 56 *Al-Hamid* The Praiseworthy
- 57 *Al-Muhsi* The Book-keeper

- 58 *Al-Mubdi The Begetter*
- 59 *Al-Muid The Restorer*
- 60 *Al-Muhyi The Quickener, Expediter*
- 61 *Al-Mumit The Destroyer*
- 62 *Al-Hayy The Ever-Living*
- 63 *Al-Qayyum The Eternal*
- 64 *Al-Wajid The Radiant, Noble*
- 65 *Al-Majid The Celebrated*
- 66 *Al-Wahid The Unique*
- 67 *Al-Ahad The One*
- 68 *As-Samad The Eternal Helper of Creation*
- 69 *Al-Qadir The Capable, Gifted*
- 70 *Al-Muqtadir The Masterer*
- 71 *Al-Muqqadim The Furtherer*
- 72 *Al-Muakhkhir The Delayer, Postponer*
- 73 *Al-Awwal The First*
- 74 *Al-Akhir The Last*
- 75 *Az-Zahir The External*
- 76 *Al-Batin The Hidden, Internal*
- 77 *Al-Wali The Ruler, Governor*
- 78 *Al-Mutaali The High, Sublime*
- 79 *Al-Barr The Righteous, Upright*
- 80 *Al-Tawwab The Dispeller of Regret, Appeaser*
- 81 *Al-Muntaqim The Avenger*
- 82 *Al-Afu The Bestower*
- 83 *Ar-Rauf The Compassionate*
- 84 *Malik Al Mulk The Possessor of Sovereignty*
- 85 *Dhul-Jalali Wal-Ikram The Lord of Majesty and Kindness*
- 86 *Al-Musqit The Pursuer of Justice*
- 87 *Al-Jami The Gatherer, Collector*
- 88 *Al-Ghani The Contented*
- 89 *Al-Mughni The Enricher*
- 90 *Al-Mani The Restrainer*
- 91 *Ad-Dar The Begetter of Need*
- 92 *An-Nafi The Helpful*
- 93 *An-Nur The Light*

- 94 Al-Hadi *The Leader*
- 95 Al-Badi *The Incomparable*
- 96 Al-Baqi *The Everlasting*
- 97 Al-Warith *The Heritage, Legacy*
- 98 Ar-Rashid *The Guide on the Rightful Path*
- 99 As-Sabur *The Patient*

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES

The 99 names of God or Allah are truly called the “most beautiful names.” The limit of 99 developed historically and arises from some of the names mentioned in the Holy Qur’an.

The indication “most beautiful names” goes back to verse 7:180, where we read: “Allah’s are the fairest names. Invoke Him by them.”

In another tradition we learn that Allah has 99 names and that anyone who internalizes them will gain Paradise. Emphasis upon Unity (*tauhid*) leads to the conclusion that each name in its perfection has the same meaning as any other of the names and that only human limitations perceive distinctions among them. Scholars of the East have tried to arrange the names in categories, but indeed this endeavor contravenes the focus on Unity. Among the 99 names of Allah 84 are literally present in the Holy Qur’an and are mentioned 1286 times.

Many people use the 99 names when reciting the praises of God with help from the rosary (*tasbeih*) with its 99 names in groups of 33 each.

“Most of the Islamic names of God are also to be found in Judaism and Christianity” (Dr. Werner Trutwin).

Additionally, Goethe has written about the names of God in his *West-East Divan*:

He, the Righteous, in His height
Wants, for everyone, what's right.
By His names, all hundred then,
Lauded be the Lord! Amen.

The 99 names of God in blown glass were assembled at the Oidtmann Glass Factory in Linnich.

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